Abraxas and the Earthman was my first exposure to a true Master of Comic Book Art. In his seminal, fully realized masterpiece, Veitch slowly peels away the layers of the human soul, to release the song to make our universe sing!

Ken Viola
Producer/Director
Masters of Comic Book Art

During his career, Rick Veitch has eviscerated comic book cliches.

Winston-Salem Journal

An heroic/transformative 'quest' epic embracing the painfully intimate (has any previous hero been stripped so utterly naked?) and truly cosmic with breathtaking skill.

This rich, imaginative fantasy fusion of Herman Melville and John C. Lilly was Veitch's first completed graphic novel, channeling New Age concerns even as it eerily anticipated the extreme iconography of Clive Barker's most innovative creations.

Read anew it stands as an eye-opening precursor to his latest masterpiece, CAN'T GET NO.

Stephen R. Bissette
PanelToPanel.net

This is what funny books would look like if someone was feeding Jack Kirby acid.

Timothy Truman
Who ought to know

Graphic Novel

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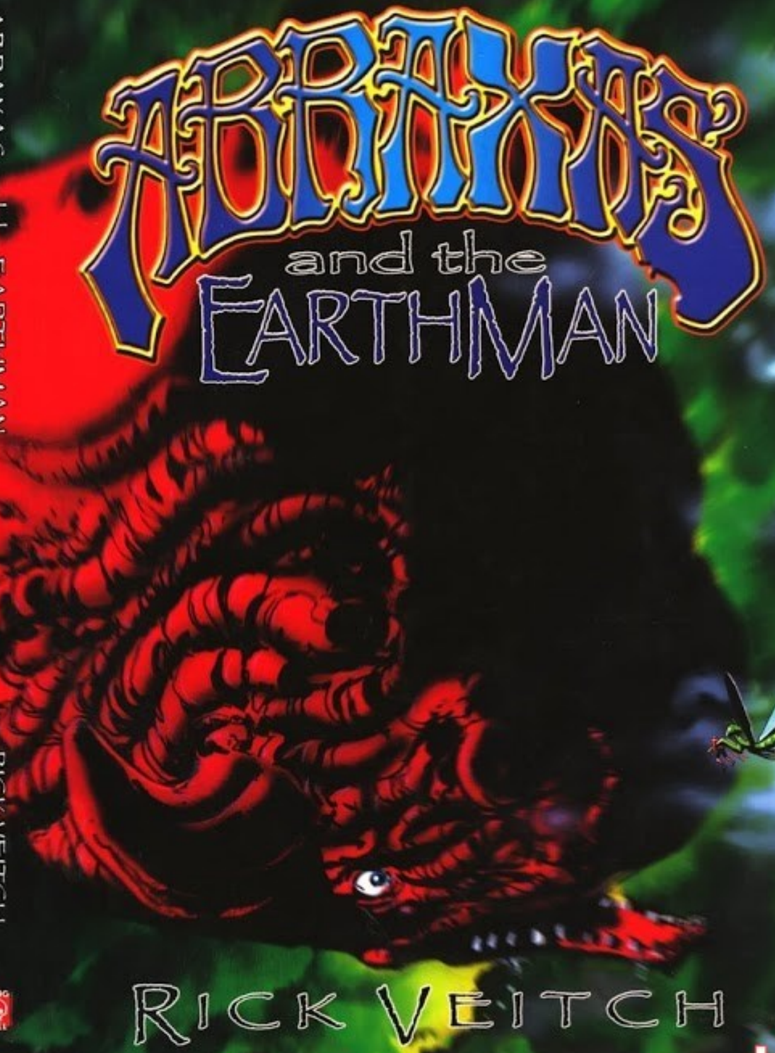
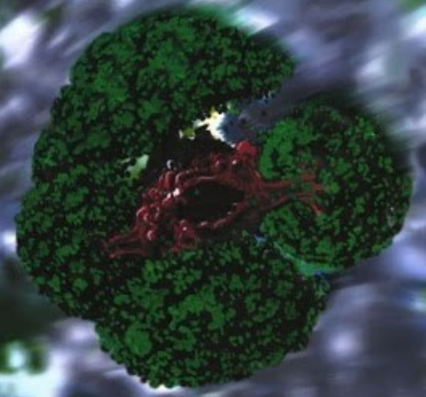
ABRAXAS and the EARTHMAN

RICK VEITCH



The most ambitious and original use of the plot and themes of Moby-Dick in a comic book narrative. Veitch brings to the comic page a vision that is uniquely his own yet respectful of Melville.

M. Thomas Inge
Melville in Popular Culture



Veitch has never shied away from big questions, and as such has produced some of the most thought-provoking and opinionated comics of the past 20 years.

VARIETY

Abraxas And The Earthman scarred me for life, man!

Coop
Low-brow artist

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Then come out those fiery effulgences, infernally superb; then the evil-blazing diamond, once the divinest symbol of the crystal skies, looks like some crown-jewel stolen from the King of Hell.

Herman Melville
Moby-Dick

Graphic Novels
by Rick Veitch

The ONE

BRAT PACK

The MAXIMORTAL

RABID EYE

POCKET UNIVERSE

CRYPTO ZOO

King Hell Press

HEARTBURST
Marvel Publishing

The RIVER
Mirage Studios

GREYSHIRT:
INDIGO SUNSET
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CAN'T GET NO
Vertigo

Anthologies

TOMORROW STORIES
Books 1 and 2
America's Best Comics

SWAMP THING
Books 5-9
Vertigo

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ABRAHAM'S and the FARTHMAN

RICK VEITCH

HotComic.net

for Archie

ABRAXAS AND THE EARTHMAN
by Rick Veitch

Published by King Hell Press
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Special thanks: Al Williamson, Tom Veitch, Cindy Leszczak and Steve Bissette

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We sing.
And we sing loud.
The song fills our hearts,
even after millenia
of hard singing and sounding
in the Zones of the Sea.

We came to this Earth
during the Great Migration,
when the folk of the Whale Planet
colonized the galaxy.
But here the gravity enslaved us,
dragging us down from the sky,
to vibrate sounds
in the Zones of the Sea.

On and on it goes.
It is life.
It is dream.
It is exquisite mirage.
But not until a man from Earth
journeys to the Whale Planet
and meets Abraxas,
will we be delivered
from the Zones of the Sea.

--a song of the humpback whale

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PRESS GANG

THE SAD FACT IS THAT FOR CENTURIES MAN AND WHALE HAVE ONLY MET AT EITHER END OF A HARPOON, TODAY, THE SLAUGHTER CONTINUES, BUT ***SOME*** MEN HAVE DROPPED THEIR SHAFTS AND BEGUN TO ***LISTEN...***

COMPUTERS VERIFY THESE AS THE SAME POLYRHYTHMIC PATTERNS WE RECORDED ON THE '78 EXPEDITION!

COMMANDER FALCO--YOU MUST HEAR THIS--IT'S ***FANTASTIC!***

ISAAC, I'VE GOT ***BETTER*** THINGS TO DO THAN LISTEN TO A BUNCH OF FISH WITH ***INDIGESTION!***

GROOOOON GROOOONNN KREET KREET KLIK KLIK

FOUR FATHOMS UNDER THE SARGASSO SEA, WITHIN THE NUCLEAR ATTACK SUBMARINE ***BARB,*** ONE SUCH MAN IS LISTENING--CETOLOGIST ***JOHN ISAAC,*** WHO HAS DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO BETTER UNDERSTANDING THE HAUNTING CRIES THAT ECHO BENEATH THE WAVES...

THOSE WHALES ARE A LOT MORE THAN DUMB ANIMALS. OUR COMPUTERS HAVE IDENTIFIED COMPLEX LEVELS OF LANGUAGE STRUCTURE IN THEIR SONGS.

THEY SOUND ALMOST--***UNEARTHLY!***

I USED TO KNOW A LITTLE LADY IN SINGAPORE WHO WOULD MAKE NOISES LIKE THAT!

NO, SIR, THIS ***ISN'T*** THEIR MATING SEASON!

AND I DOUBT IF THE NAVY TAKES THIS AS LIGHTLY AS YOU DO, OR THEY SURELY WOULDN'T HAVE PROVIDED ME WITH THE SERVICES OF YOUR SUB FOR MY RESEARCH!

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ENGULFED AND GUTTED, SHE MAKES HER *FINAL DIVE...*

NO CHANCE TO REACH THE SURFACE-- THIS IS *IT!*

...AND I'LL NEVER KNOW *WHO* WAS RESPONSIBLE... OR *WHY!*

JOHN ISAAC IS *WRONG!*

S-SOMETHING FROM INSIDE THAT THING IS *PULLING ME IN!*

GOT TO GET A HOLD OF FALCO-- MAYBE SAVE HIM, TOO!

AIR! I CAN *BREATH* IN THIS STUFF!

I'VE HEARD OF EXPERIMENTS USING *MEMBRANE* AS EFFECTIVE MOISTURE BARRIERS, BUT NEVER AT *THESE* PRESSURES!

CAPTAIN ROTWANG! I'VE GAFFED A PAIR OF THE DOUBLE-BRAINERS!

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PUT YER BACKS INTO IT, ME BUCKOS! LET US LEAVE THIS IMPOVERISHED LITTLE PLANET WITH ITS TINY WHALES!

ISAAC HAS NOT UNDERSTOOD A WORD THAT HAS BEEN SPOKEN TO HIM...

...BUT THE FULL IMPACT OF THE SITUATION IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR!

UNNNH... WHAT'S GOING ON?

COMMANDER, I THINK WE'RE BEING SHANGHAIED!

IS SHE BOILING YET, MR. STAUB?

AYE, CAPTAIN ROTWANG!

REVERSE GRAVITY!

SECURE MEMBRANES FOR DEEP SPACE!

ISAAC HAS AN OVERPOWERING FEELING THAT HE IS LEAVING HIS HOME PLANET--PERHAPS FOREVER--A FEELING THAT SINKS IN HIS GUTS DEEPER THAN THE BARB HAS SUNK INTO THE BRINY HEART OF THE OCEAN!

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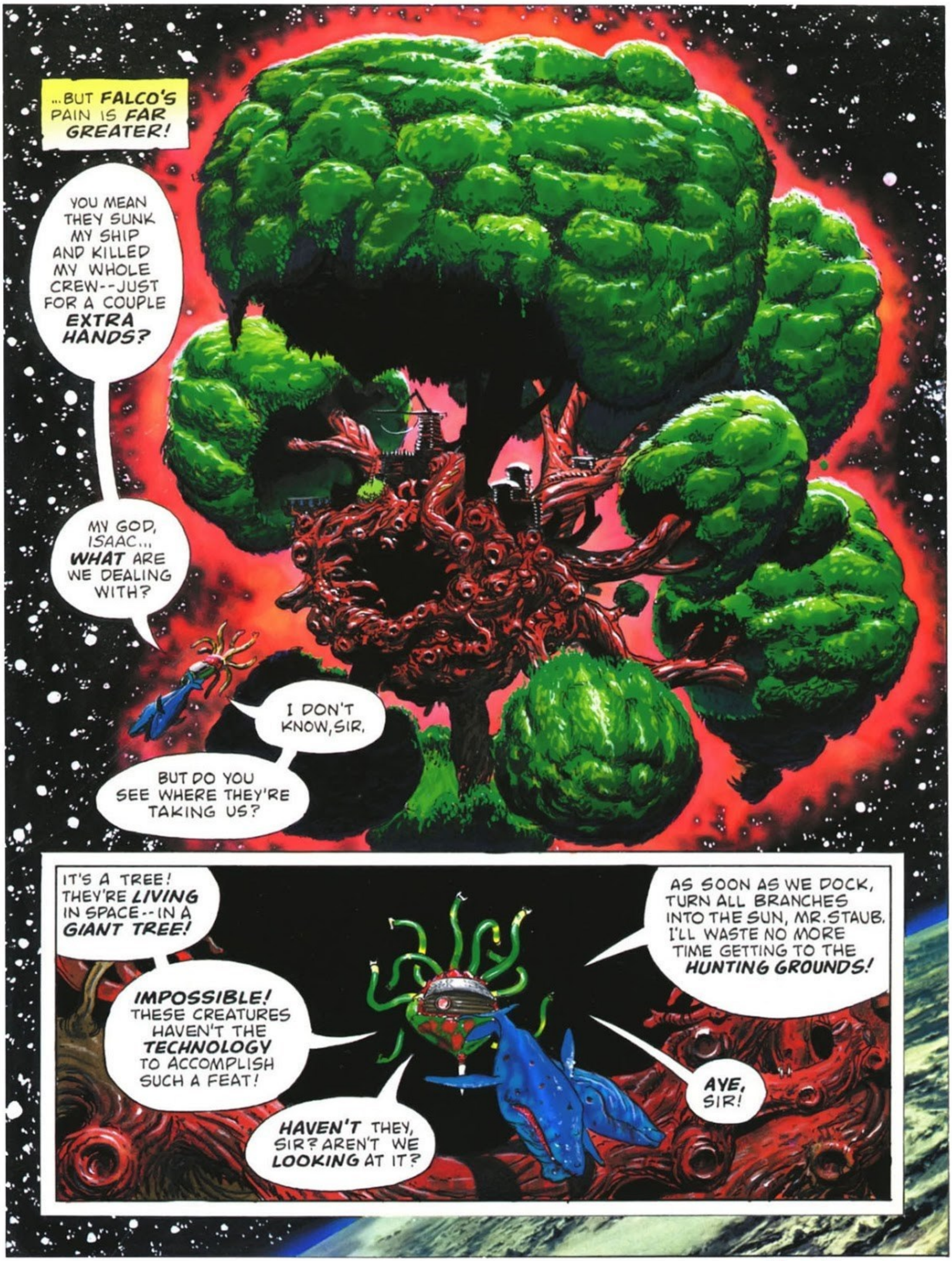

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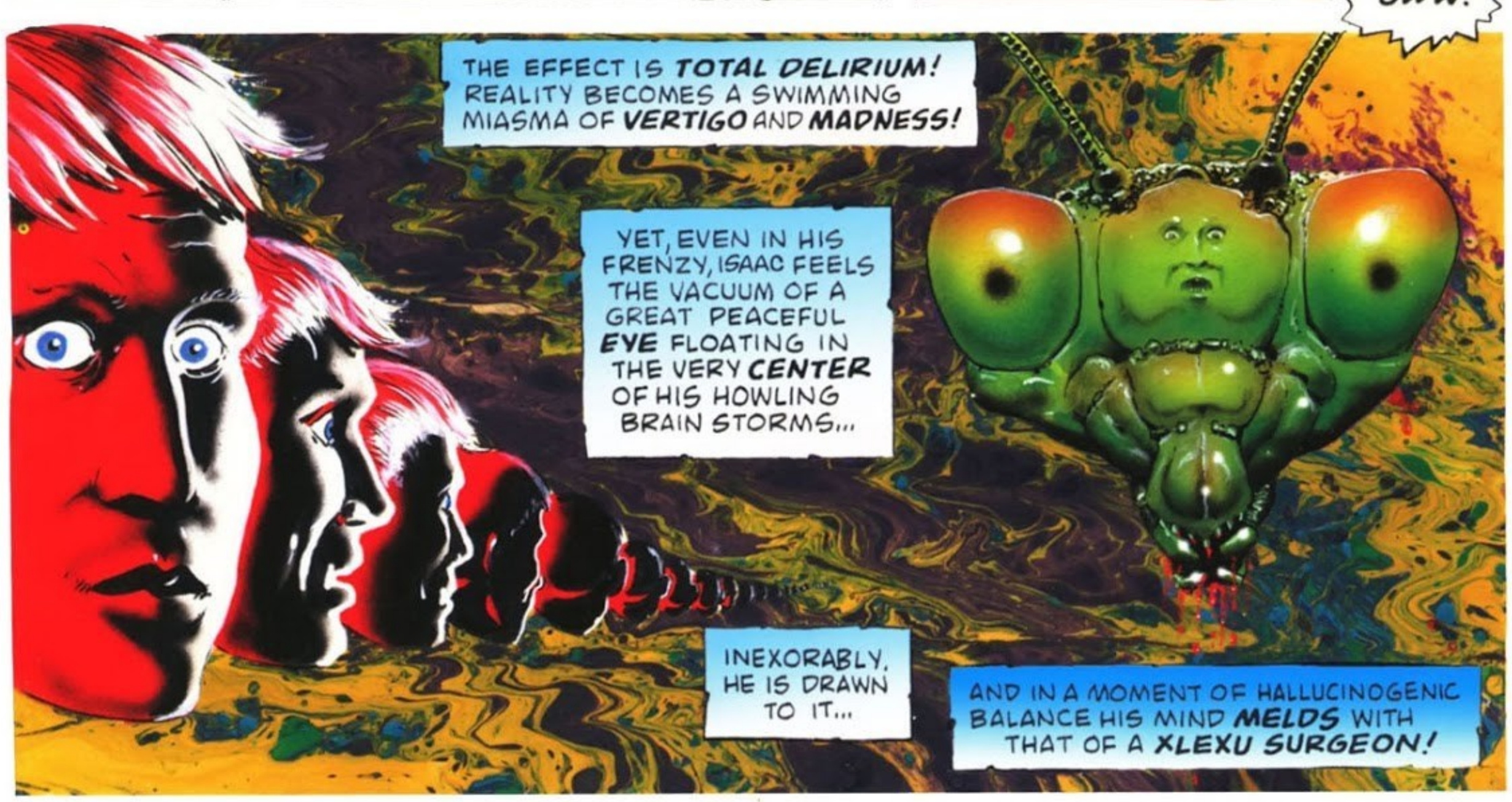

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ISAAC AWAKENS TO THE DISORIENTING SENSATION OF INHABITING ***TWO BODIES*** AT ONCE--

--HIS OWN PARALYZED FLESH AND THAT OF THE XLEXU!

HIS ESSENSE DRIFTS BETWEEN OSCILLATING WAVES OF HUMAN REASONING AND INSECTILE THOUGHT PROCESSES...

IT IS HIS ***OWN*** CRUSTACEOUS CLAWS THAT REACH DOWN AND MAKE THE FIRST ***INCISIONS...***

WHILE FROM HIS ANESTHETIZED BODY HE WATCHES IN HELPLESS FASCINATION AS HIS HUMANITY IS ***PEELED AWAY!***

AND SOMEWHERE BACK ON EARTH THE WHALES ARE SINGING!

...not until a man from Earth
journeys to the Whale Planet
and meets Abraxas,
will we be delivered
from the Zones of the Sea.

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A VERSE IS IT? SING THEN, YE SLY DOG, AND LET THE REST OF THIS GANG BEAT TIME WITH THEIR HAMMERS!

WHY, THANKEE, MISTER STAUB!

:AHEM:

OLD ROTWANG WENT A'WHALIN', BUT HE COME BACK NONE TOO SOON. HE'D SWAPPED HIS LEG FOR AN UGLY PEG TO A WHALE 'TWAS BIG AS A MOON!

NOW THIS WHALE CAME DOWN FLUKES A'FLAILIN', AVENGIN' HIS FAMILY AND PRIDE. TO ROTWANG'S EYES SEEMED A FITTING PRIZE, "'TIS THE GREAT RED, ABRAXAS!" HE CRIED.

"TO THE BOATS, TO THE BOATS", SCREAMED THE CAPTAIN, BUT THE CREW FLED B'LOW DECKS, COURAGE FAILIN'. FOR THEY FEARED NOT THEIR MASTER AS MUCH AS DISASTER, SO THE OLD MAN WAS LEFT AT THE RAILIN'.

NOW ABRAXAS BEGINS THE DISMASTIN', THE SHIP STARTS TO DROP, NOW SHE CRASHES! THE CREW IS ALL FRIED WHEN THE FURNACE SPLITS WIDE, ONLY ROTWANG CRAWLS FROM THE ASHES.

SO ONCE AGAIN ROTWANG IS SAILIN', ONLY THIS TIME 'TIS **US** WHO'S HIS CREW. WILL WE KILL OLD ABRAXAS WHEN THE GREAT RED ATTACKS US, OR GO DOWN IN THIS LEAFY CANOE?

HEHE HAR HAR!

BRAVO, NEVERSWEAT!

HOHO! NEVERSWEAT HAS HIT THE MARK AGAIN AND GOT THE REST OF THE CREW TO DO HIS JOB TO BOOT!

BACK TO WORK, YE RASCAL!

MISTER STAUB!

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ISAAC ACTS INSTINCTIVELY TO PROTECT HIMSELF...

THIS IS SOME STUPID INITIATION MEANT TO *INTIMIDATE* ME...

HIS *AURA* RIPPLES INTO FOCUS AND EXPANDS RAPIDLY...

...NOT UNLIKE THE RITE OF PASSAGE I HAD TO ENDURE THE FIRST TIME I CROSSED THE EQUATOR!

WITH *TERRIFYING* RESULTS!

NEPTUNE'S COURT WAS NEVER LIKE THIS!

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THE HUNT

THE SONGS OF THE WHALES ARE SOLEMN HYMNS...

SYNCOPATED YET UNCONNECTED...

MYSTICALLY RAPTUROUS YET MAGNIFICENTLY TRAGIC...

I - I HEAR YOU...

GROOOOON KREET KLIK KLIK KLIK

WEEP WEEP BARROOOM

DEEP IN THE BELLY OF THE WHALING VESSEL, **YORRIKKE**, WITH HIS SENSES ALTERED BY THE XLEXU SURGEONS, JOHN ISAAC ALONE IS WITNESS TO THE MIGHTY CHORUS THAT VIBRATES UP FROM BELOW...

...AND **NOW** I'M BEGINNING...

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...TO **SEE** YOU!

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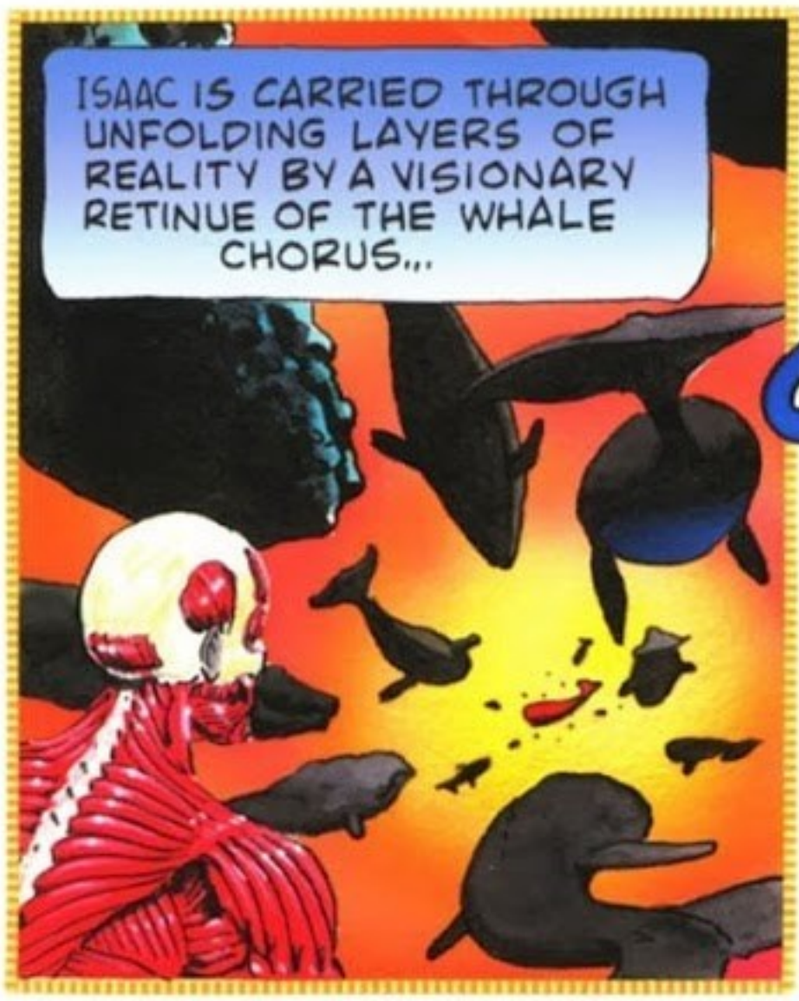

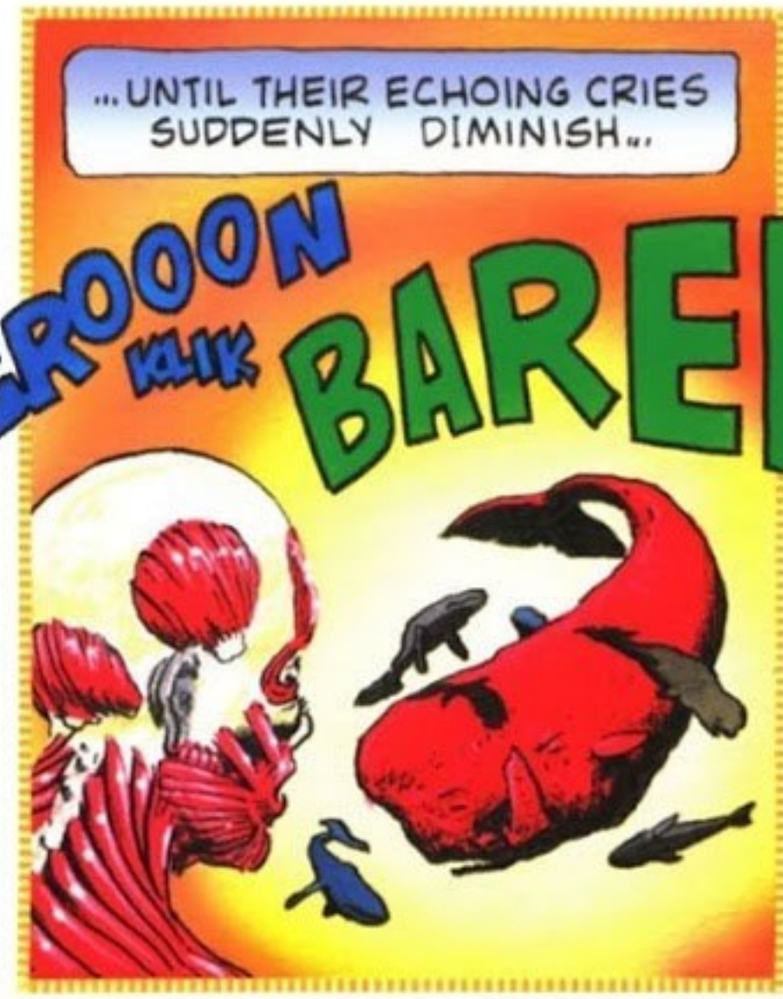

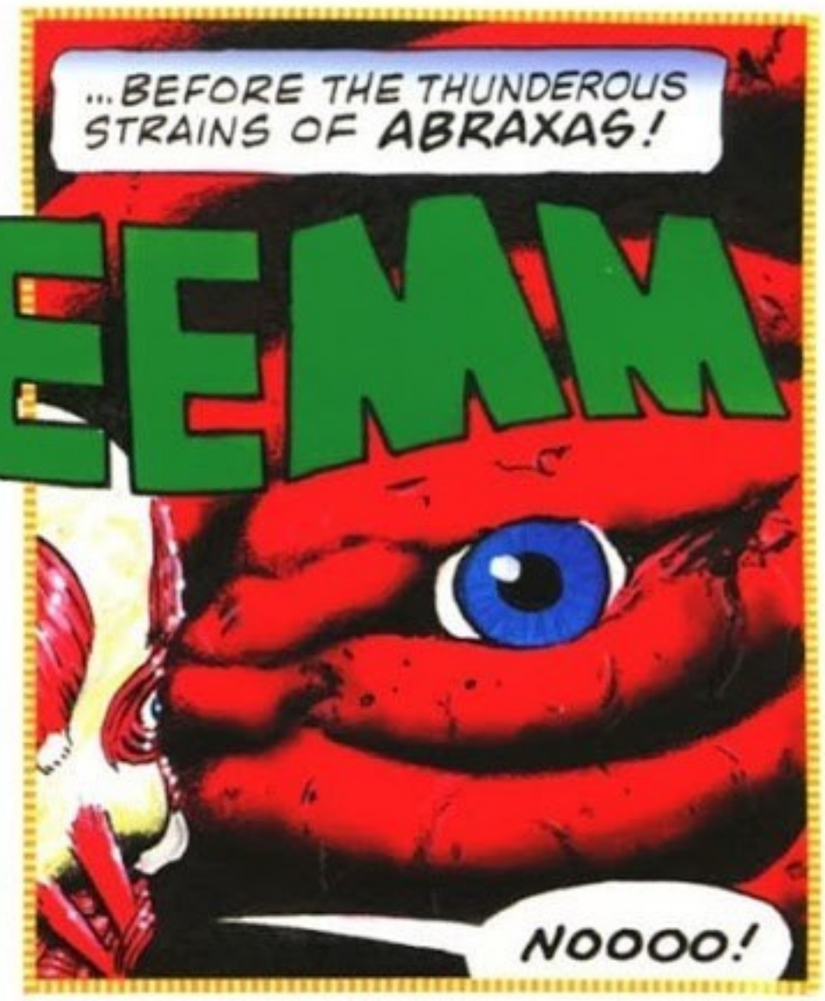

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W-WE'RE WITH YE, CAP'N... BUT JUST ***HOW*** CAN WE FIND ***ONE*** WHALE ON THIS WHOLE BLEEDIN' PLANET?

THE XLEXU HAVE FIDDLED WITH THE EARTHMAN'S BRAINS, MR. STAUB...

THEY SAY HE CAN NOW SENSE THE BEAST AND LEAD US TO HIM.

THE QUESTION IS: ***WILL*** HE?

THAT'S RIGHT! NOW CAN YE NOT ANSWER THAT, MISTER ***FALCO?!***

I-I THINK HE WILL ***RESIST*** YOU, CAPTAIN.

ON EARTH HE WAS A SCIENTIST-- A MAN OF PRINCIPLES...

PRINCIPLES?

JUST WHAT GOOD ARE YER DAMN PRINCIPLES WHEN YER SKIN'S BEEN PEELED OFF?

OR FOR THAT MATTER, WHEN YER HEAD LIES SEPARATED FROM YER BODY? EH?

NO!

SO TAKE A MESSAGE TO YOUR FRIEND FOR ME, MR. FALCO...!

NOOO!

TELL'M HE CAN RESTORE ***BOTH*** YER PRINCIPLES IF HE'LL ONLY FIND ME ***ABRAXAS!***

NOOOOOO!

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BUT SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF SPACE AND TIME-- ***ABRAXAS HAS FOUND THE EARTHMAN!***

BAREEEM

GOOD GOD.

UNTIL, LIKE A BOLT FROM THE BLUE, THE APPARITION IS ***GONE***-- DISPERSED BY AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL--

HUH?

CATCH ME!

CATCH ME!

... THAT SIGNALS A REUNION ...OF SORTS.

YAAGH!

SMACK

OWW!

COMMANDER FALCO!

WHU... WHU... ***H-HOW...?***

THOSE DAMN XLEXU SURGEONS, ISAAC--SAME AS ***YOU!***

BUT LISTEN! THEY'LL RESTORE US ***BOTH*** IF YOU'LL ONLY ***CO-OPERATE*** WITH ROTWANG!

I CAN'T DO ***THAT!*** ROTWANG HAS COME HERE TO HUNT AND KILL ***WHALES!***

THIS MAY SOUND CRAZY, BUT SOMEHOW I'M IN ***TOUCH*** WITH THE WHALES ***--THROUGH VISIONS!***

MY ***AURA*** HAS ***MINGLED*** WITH THEIRS...

DON'T GIVE ME THAT GODDAMN HIPPY "SAVE THE WHALES" SHIT!!

FOR CHRISSAKES THIS IS OUR LIVES YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!!

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SWINGING DOWN INTO THE SHIMMERING GREEN SKIES OF THE WHALE PLANET, THE YORRIKKE IS NOT LONG IN ENCOUNTERING...

WHALES HO!

IS THERE A RED HORNED DEVIL AMONG THEM?

NAY, CAP'N! I MAKE ABOUT TEN BOWHEADS TO STARBOARD SIDE!

SO I SEE! RED WHALES OR NO, WE'VE STILL MANY AN EMPTY CASK TO FILL WITH OIL!

TO THE BOATS!

TO THE BOATS!!

AND A FULL CUP OF GROG TO THE MEN WHO PROVIDE THE TRADITIONAL FIRST GIBLET FOR MY TABLE!

YOU HEARD THE CAPTAIN! ...READY WITH THOSE IRONS!

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NOT A BRIGHT BUNCH BUT ENTHUSIASTIC! JUST THE TYPE OF MEN I NEED TO LOCK HORNS WITH THAT CRIMSON BEHEMOTH!

...NOW IF ONLY THAT SKINLESS FOOL WILL COME AROUND...

ROTWANG!

SO, EARTHMAN-- HAVE YE AT LAST DECIDED TO LEARN THE FINE ART OF WHALING?

SOME CALL IT MURDER, CAPTAIN.

SO THEY DO! WILL YE BECOME OUR ACCOMPLICE IN THIS CRIME, THEN?

FIRST, I WANT SOME STRAIGHT ANSWERS--

CAN THE XLEXU RESTORE FALCO AND I AS WE WERE BEFORE YOU HAD US MUTILATED?

IF I SO ORDER IT, OF COURSE!

AND IF I HELP YOU WILL YOU RETURN US TO EARTH?

WITH EASE, EARTHMAN! AND IN LESS THAN A YEAR'S TIME--IF ALL GOES WELL!

NOW I'VE A QUESTION FOR YE...

IS IT TRUE YE CAN PERCEIVE THE SONGS OF THE WHALES?

...AND FEEL THEM TOO...

YES... I SEE THEM AND HEAR THEM...

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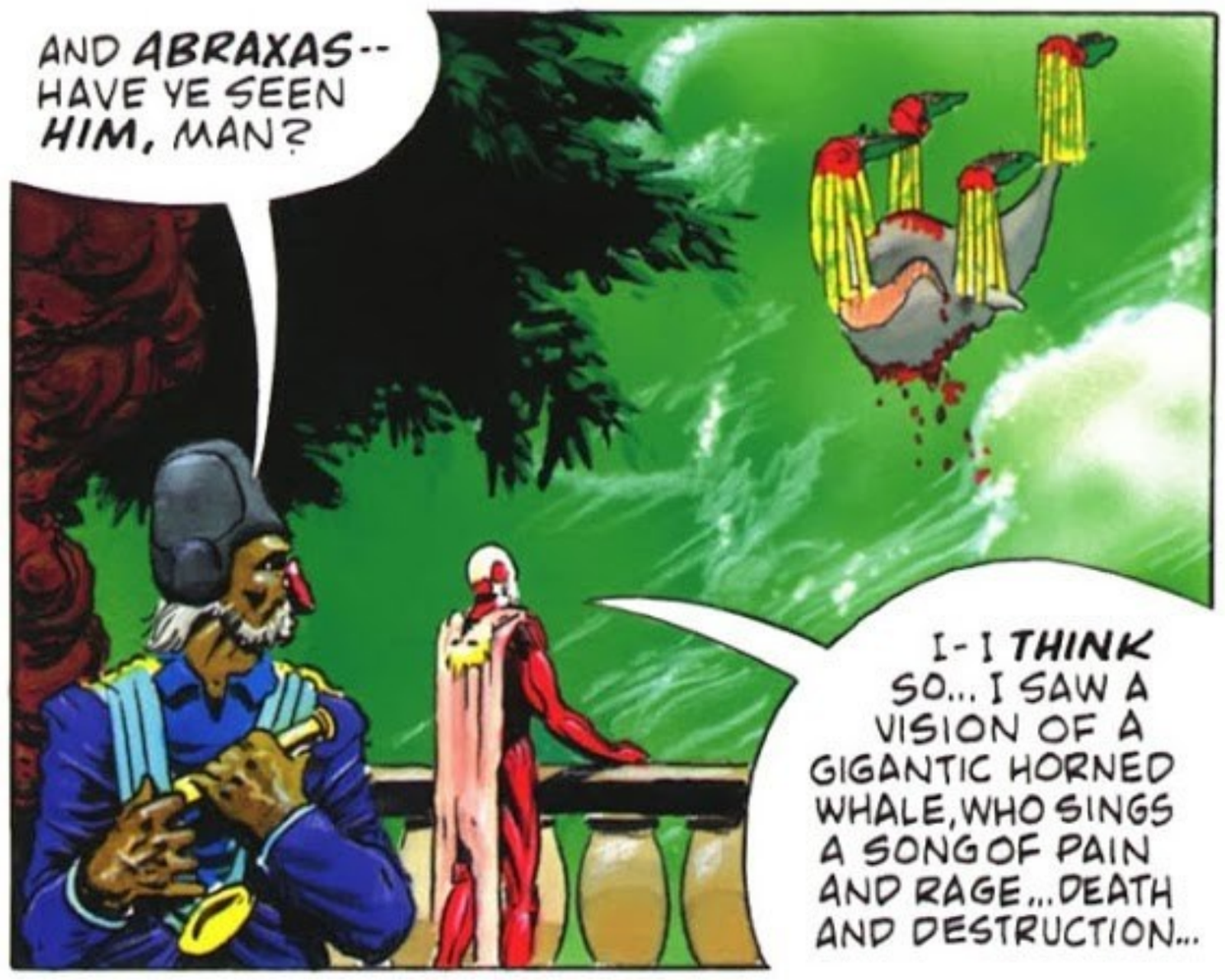

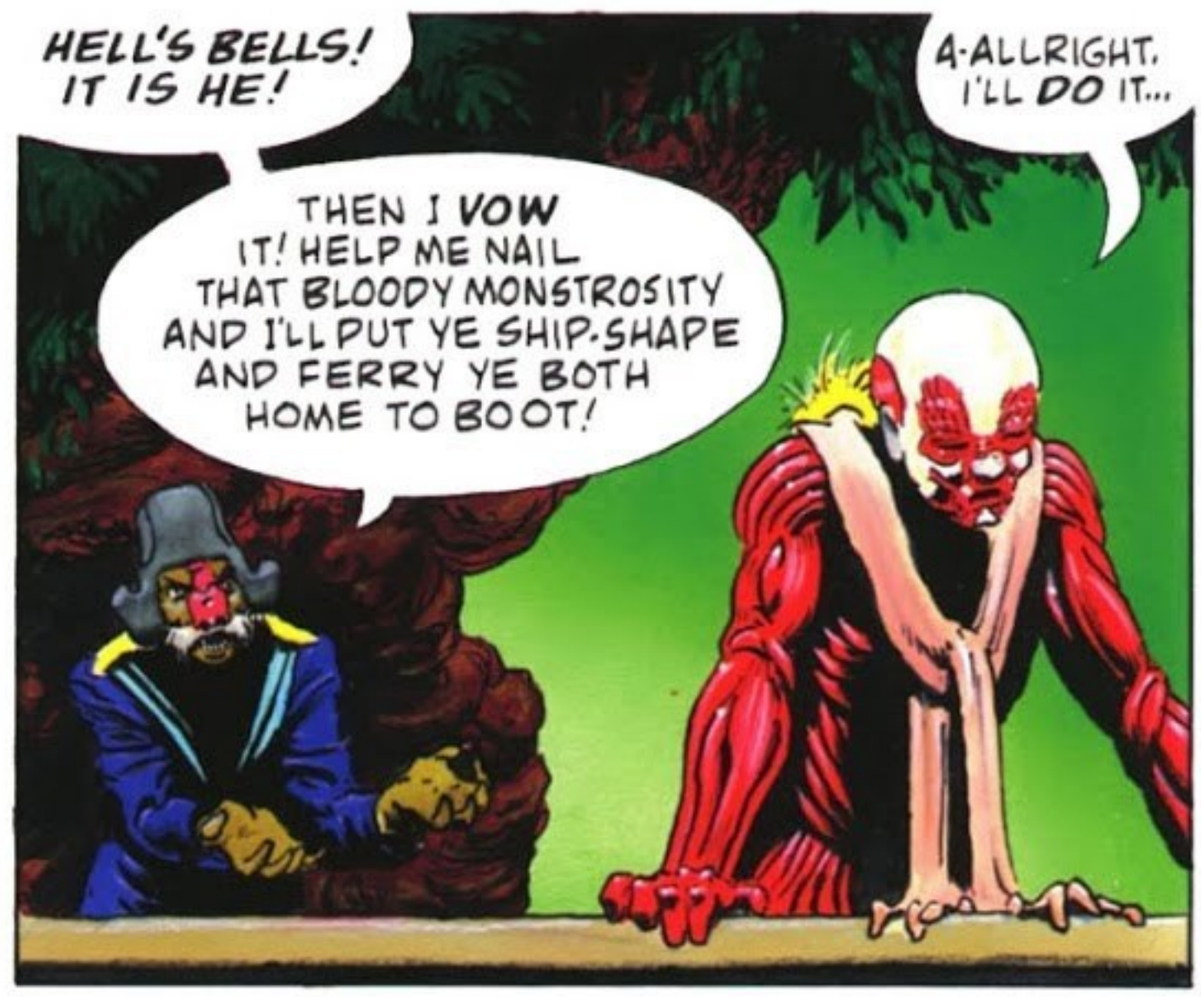

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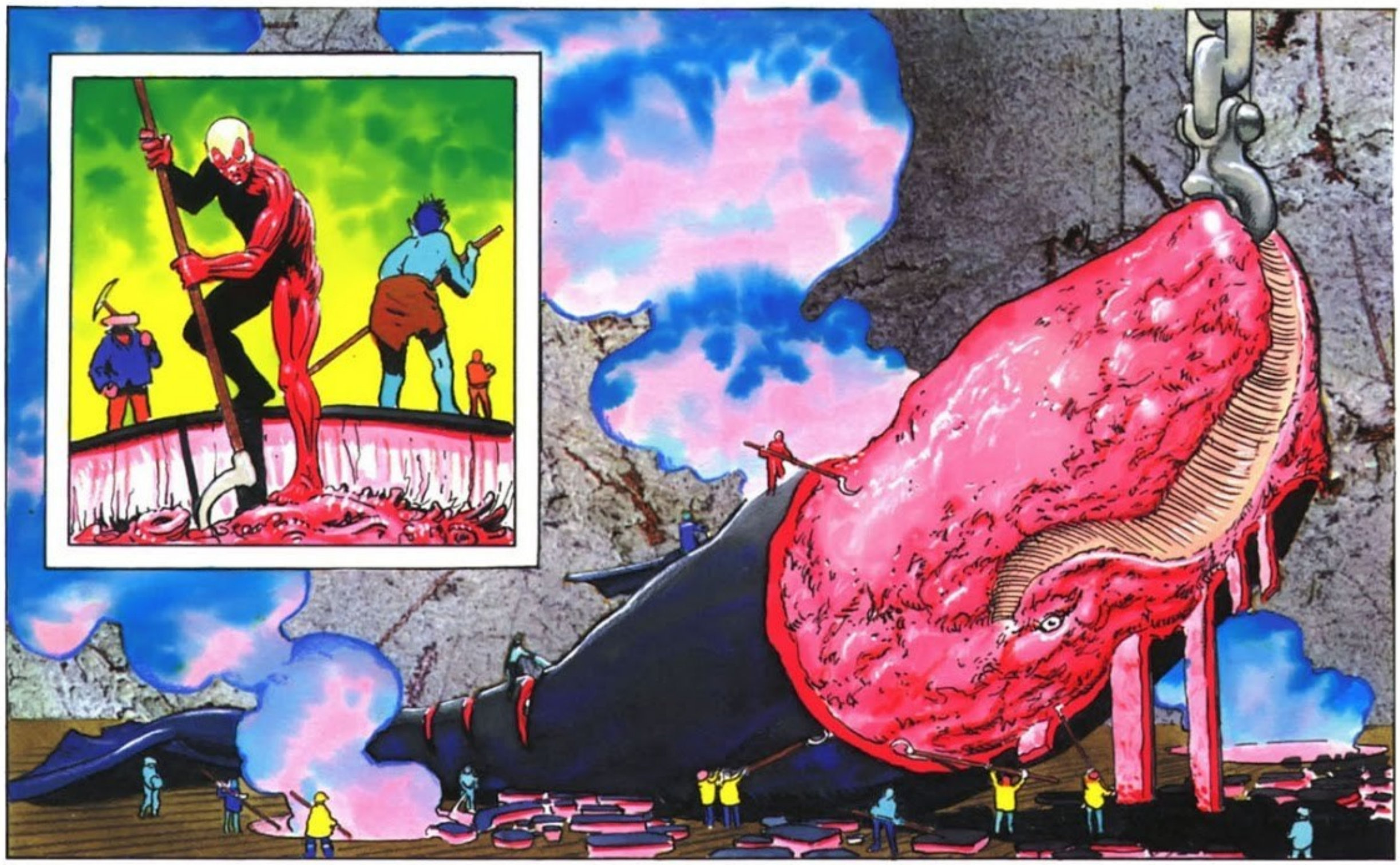

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LAST SUPPER

PROPELLED BY THE SOFT KISS OF THE SOLAR WIND, HELD ALOFT BY HER GREAT GRAVITY FURNACES, THE PAN-GALACTIC WHALING SHIP ***YORRIKKE*** SLIPS THROUGH THE DARKENING SKIES OF THE ***WHALE PLANET...***

STRAIGHT INTO THE TEETH OF AN APPROACHING STORM FRONT SHE SAILS...

DIRECTED, AS IF BY UNSEEN HANDS, TO AN ***UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER!***

SHIP HO!

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HELL AND DAMNATION! THE DEMON HAS SWALLOWED DOLPHIN'S SPIRIT AS WELL AS HIS LIMBS!

MAKE YE NO MISTAKE--ROTWANG'S SPIRIT STILL ABIDES WITHIN, ALBEIT SCREAMING FOR VENGEANCE!

HE SURE CAN BE CRUEL, CAN'T HE, KITTEN?

WHAT A THING TO WAKE UP TO!

WHAT'S HIS PROBLEM ANYWAY, SPHINX?

IT TAKES A SPECIAL TYPE OF MAN TO HELM A SHIP AND CREW ACROSS THE GALAXY FOR A WHALE HUNT!

ROTWANG HAS ALL THE NEEDED QUALITIES-- TO THE EXTREME!

PARDON ME IF I REMAIN UNIMPRESSED, BUT AFTER WHAT HE ORDERED DONE TO FALCO AND ME...

DON'T FEEL TOO SORRY FOR YOURSELF, KITTEN... MOST OF US HERE HAVE BEEN ALTERED BY THE XLEXU, IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE US FIT FOR DUTY IN THE VOID!

TAKE ME FOR INSTANCE! MY KIND HAVE BEEN BRED BY THE XLEXU JUST TO SERVE IN THE HIGH BRANCHES OF THE WHALERS WHERE THE TWO-LEGGER'S CAN'T GO!

THE XLEXU'S SURGICAL TALENTS ARE REALLY THE BACKBONE OF THE FLEET!

BUT WHAT'S THIS I HEAR THEY'VE DONE TO YOUR BRAIN?

I THINK THEY'VE CONNECTED MY BRAIN'S TWO HEMISPHERES INTO ONE UNIT! NOW I'M ABLE TO REACH OUT AND TOUCH THE WHALES WITH MY THOUGHTS!

...AND OLD ROTWANG'S GOT BIG PLANS FOR YOU, I BET!

HEY, EARTHMAN! THE CAPTAIN WANTS YOU IN HIS CABIN FOR DINNER!

YEAH-- IT LOOKS LIKE HE DOES!

WALK WITH ME, SPHINX-- I COULD USE SOMEBODY TO TALK TO.

SURE, KITTEN... I ALWAYS WAS A PUSHOVER FOR A GUY WHO NEEDED A LITTLE COMPANY...

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AVAST! OUR GUEST OF HONOR HAS ARRIVED!

COME SIT BY ME, MR. ISAAC! YER ABOUT TO TASTE THE FINEST SUCCULENT IN SEVEN GALAXIES!

BUT FIRST A TOAST TO OUR NEWEST CREWMAN!

FALCO! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

YOU BET, ISAAC, NOW THAT YOU'VE DECIDED TO WORK FOR ROTWANG!

YOU'LL SEE-- EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OK!

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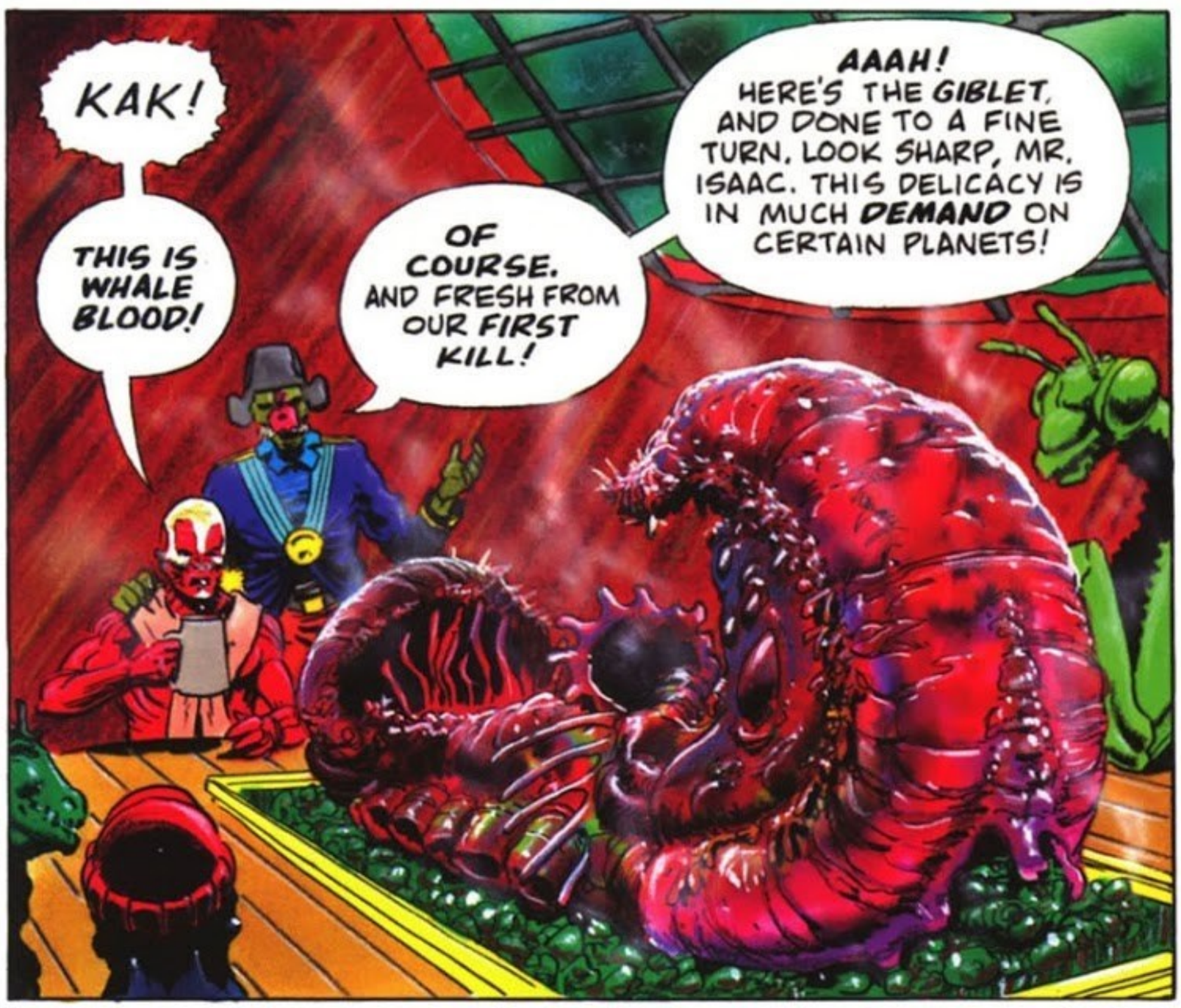

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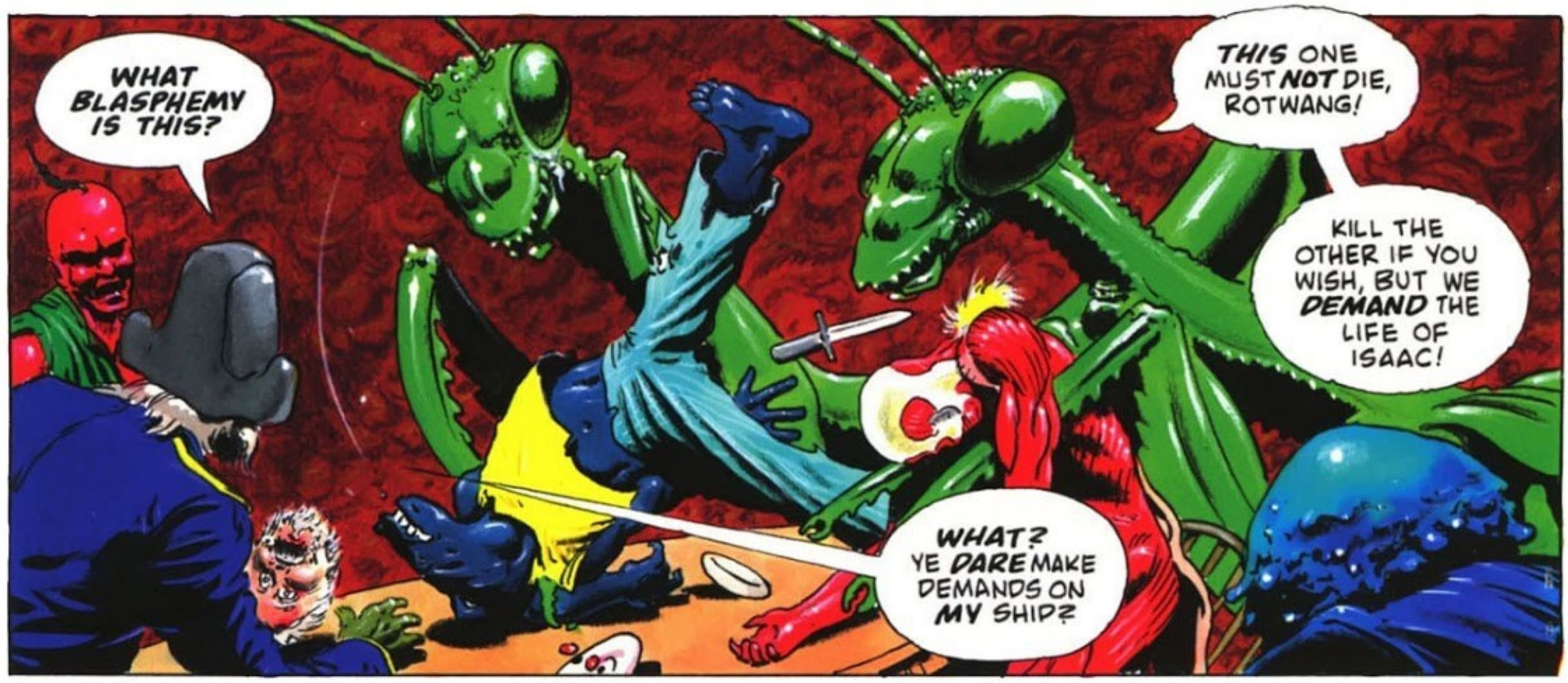

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THE GAME IS **UP**, MY BROTHER! DELIVER THE EARTHMAN TO HIS **DESTINATION!**

MY LIFE IS FORFEIT TO THE **GREAT EXPERIMENT!**

SKEWER 'EM, YE SCURVY MAGGOTS!

TREACHEROUS INSECTS!

XLEXU SURGEONS HAVE SERVED FAITHFULLY ON **EVERY** WHALER SINCE THE FIRST ONE SHIPPED OUT OF KALIGHOUL!

WHY **NOW** THIS TREASON? **WHY?**

WHAT IN **HELL...?**

THE DYING XLEXU'S ANSWER COMES **NOT** IN WORDS...

...BUT IN A **VISION!**

A TANTALIZING VISION OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE XLEXU THAT HINTS AT THEIR **TRUE** MOTIVES...

...AND A DEVASTATING VISION OF **SELF!**

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BELLY OF THE BEAST

ABRAXAS! HE BURSTS THROUGH THE STORM CLOUDS, BLOTTING OUT THE SKY, CHURNING THE HEAVENS IN HIS VENGEFUL WAKE...

...THEN HE STOPS!

SO, MONSTER, IT SEEMS THE STRINGS OF THE XLEXU HAVE JERKED US BOTH LIKE PUPPETS TO THIS MOMENT!

YE SENSE IT, TOO! THIS ENCOUNTER IS AS IMMUTABLY DECREED AS DAY MUST FOLLOW NIGHT!

THE CLOCK OF FATE BEGINS TO CHIME, WHALE-- BUT IT TOLLS YER FINAL HOUR!

IT IS YER EXECUTIONER YE NOW GAZE UPON!

TO THE BOATS, MEN!

BUT HIS SIZE...

DEAR AMMA, WE NEVER SIGNED ON FOR THIS!

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THE GREAT RED BEGINS TO MOVE IN EVER CONTRACTING CIRCLES AROUND THE YORRIKKE...

USE YER HEADS -- YER ONLY HOPE IS TO BRING HIM DOWN...

...ELSE HE'LL HAVE US ALL FOR HIS SUPPER!

HE'S RIGHT! WE'VE NO CHOICE!

WHILE BEYOND THE NEXT CLOUD BANK...

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FROM THE LEAD WHALEBOAT, ROTWANG LETS LOOSE BARB AFTER BARB INTO THE HIDE OF HIS NEMESIS...

FEEL THESE NAILS, ABRAXAS! FROM HELL'S HEART I STAB AT THEE!

FOR HATE'S SAKE I SPIT MY FINAL BREATH AT THEE!

BUT HIS FEARSOME RAGE IS DWARFED BY THAT OF THE GREAT RED!

IN A BLOOD FRENZY, ABRAXAS BEGINS TO DISMAST THE YORRIKKE, LIMB BY LIMB...

MOVE HIM AWAY FROM THE SHIP, YE MAGGOTS!

THE GRAVITY FURNACE CAN'T TAKE SUCH ABUSE!

THEY'RE TRYING, CAPTAIN!

IRONICALLY THE ONLY ONE LEFT ABOARD THE YORRIKKE WHO IS UNAWARE OF THE DANGER IS THE TENDER OF THE GRAVITY FURNACE.

THAT WOULD BE THE HEADLESS BODY OF COMMANDER FALCO...

MECHANICALLY FEEDING THE FURNACE AS IT HAS FOR MONTHS...

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THE BELLOWING OF THE WHALE MIXES WITH THE SCREAMS OF DYING MEN...

THE MONSTER IS TOO BIG, CAPTAIN! OUR BARBS HAVE NO EFFECT!

THE SHIP IS BURNING! THE BOILERS HAVE LET GO!

NO! TO HAVE COME SO FAR! TO HAVE RISKED SO MUCH! ONLY TO SEE HIM BURN YET ANOTHER FINE SHIP OUT FROM UNDER ME...?

WHAT BREAKS IN ME NOW? WHAT SINEW CRACKS?

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AS ROTWANG'S EMOTIONS WRITHE LIKE A SACK FULL OF SNAKES, **DESPAIR** STALKS THE BURNING DECKS OF THE YORRIKKE...

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ACID!

PHEW! THIS MUST BE ONE OF HIS STOMACHS!

HE'S GOT HALF THE WHALING INDUSTRY DIGESTING IN HIS GASTRIC JUICES!

BUT IT'S MORE THAN JUST WHALERS-- I CAN MAKE OUT SOME HI-TECH ROCKETS DOWN THERE, TOO... HUH?

NO LIGHT! NO! TAKE IT AWAY!

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LITTLE PIECES... PIECES ON A GAME BOARD...

HE'S TALKIN' GIBBERISH!

THE STRAIN'S BEEN TOO MUCH! THE CAPTAIN'S GONE NITWIT!

SOMEONE MUST ASSUME COMMAND.

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IMPACT! MOUNTAIN RANGES RISE AND FALL AS THE WHALE PLANET QUAKES UNDER EACH REPEATED CONCUSSION...

THE SELF

ABRAXAS IS MAD WITH PAIN!

PAIN SO EXCRUCIATING AND PROLONGED THAT THE GREAT RED'S ONLY RELIEF IS THAT OF *MORE PAIN!*

BAREEEEEN

© 1982 VEITCH

HE SCREAMS OUT HIS AGONY IN THUNDEROUS SONG...

...AND DEEP IN HIS GUTS THE CRY IS HEARD!

LOON MUST DO MAGICAL DANCE! MAYBE MAGIC DANCE WILL QUIET WHALE!

CALM DOWN, WHALE... EASY, BIG FELLA...

NO WONDER THIS LOON CHARACTER IS SO *CRAZY!*

ABRAXAS' SONG IS *TOO MUCH* TO TAKE!

I'M ALREADY AT THE *BREAKING POINT!*

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FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF THE AWAKENED SELF, REALITY IS QUITE DIFFERENT...

I'M NOT FULLY FORMED YET...

BUT HERE I CAN SEE ABRAXAS' PAIN AS A RIP IN THE HARMONIC BALANCE OF EXISTENCE!

AND I THINK I CAN RELIEVE THAT PAIN...

ISAAC RELEASES TONGUES OF LIVING AURIC ENERGY TO LICK THE WOUND...

AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT!

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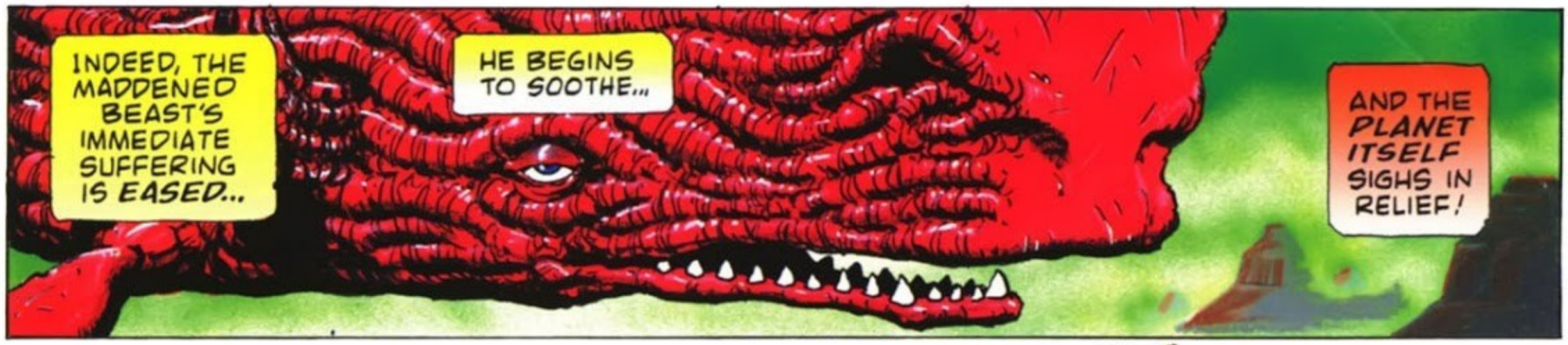

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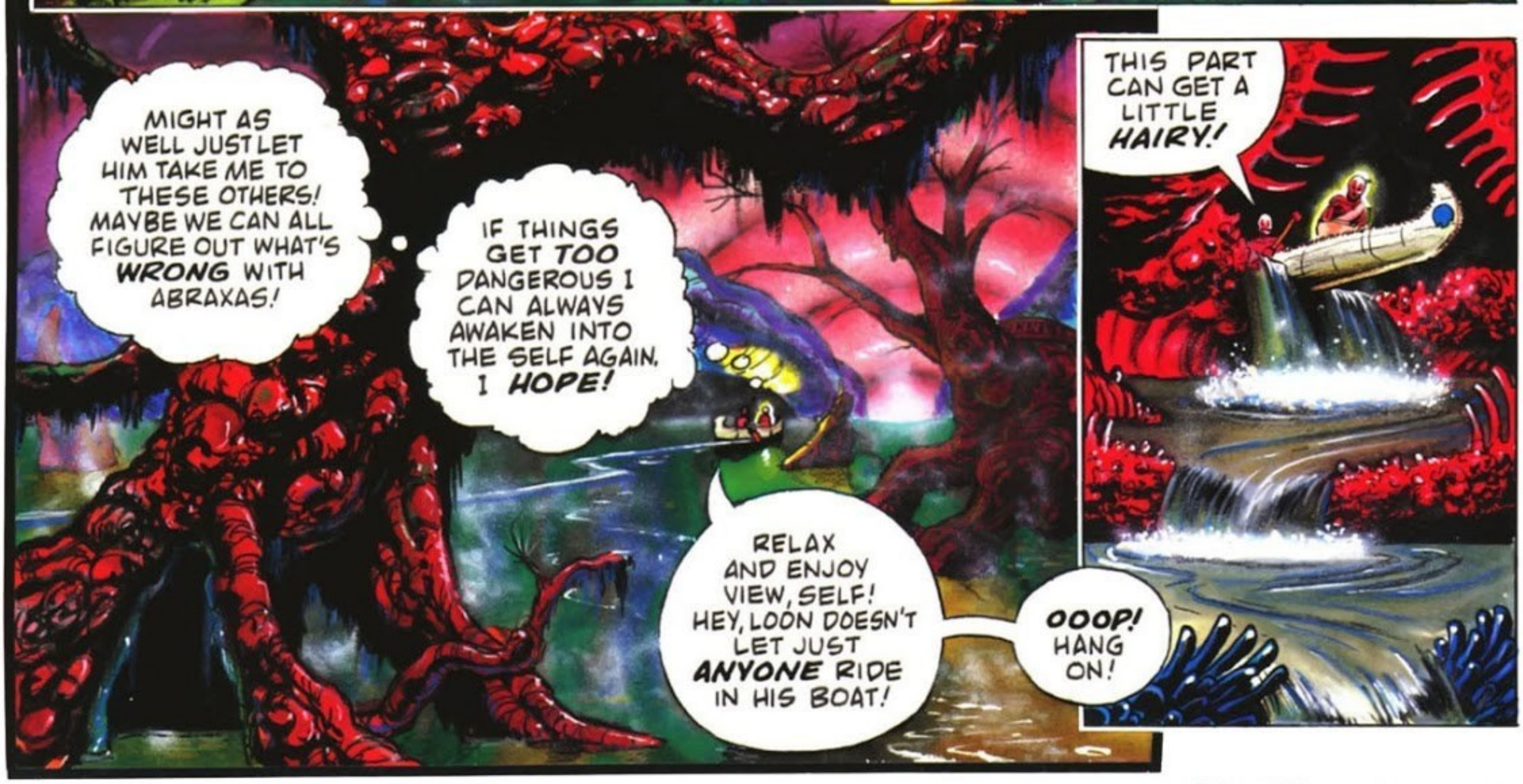

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LOON SOMEHOW GUIDES THE MAKESHIFT CRAFT DOWN A ROLLERCOASTER OF FOAMING RAPIDS...

...UNTIL THEY BURST INTO THE SECOND STOMACH CHAMBER OF THE WHALE!

LOON-- THIS OLD DERELICT IS **PIERCING** ABRAXAS IN A **SCORE** OF PLACES!

HOW LONG HAS IT **BEEN** HERE?

LONG TIME... LONGER THAN ANY OF US CAN REMEMBER!

IT NEVER SEEMS TO **DIGEST** LIKE THE OTHERS!

THAT'S BECAUSE THE WHALING SHIPS ARE ONLY **WOOD!**

THIS BABY IS A PRODUCT OF **HIGH TECHNOLOGY!** IT'S CONSTRUCTED OF VERY DENSE **METAL!**

UNGH! THIS IS **BAD PART!** NOT **HEALTHY** TO HANG AROUND **HERE!**

ANOTHER SURE SIGN OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY-- **CHEMICAL WASTE!** SOMETHING WE'RE ALL TOO FAMILIAR WITH BACK ON EARTH!

THERE MUST BE **TONS** OF IT LEAKING INTO ABRAXAS' DIGESTIVE TRACT! **THIS IS WHAT HE'S SCREAMING ABOUT!**

MEANWHILE, THE CASTAWAYS HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THE TRAIL OF FOOTPRINTS...

TAKE A LOOK, CAP'N... WOULDN'T THAT HERD HAVE KEPT US BUSY IN THE OLD DAYS?

...TILL HE SPOUTS BLACK BLOOD AND ROLLS FIN OUT...

THEY SAY THE WHALES OF EARTH SWIM IN THE SEA...?

IT'S **TRUE!** I NEVER REALIZED HOW BEAUTIFUL A WHALE COULD **BE** UNTIL I SAW ONE IN FLIGHT...

ZZIIISH

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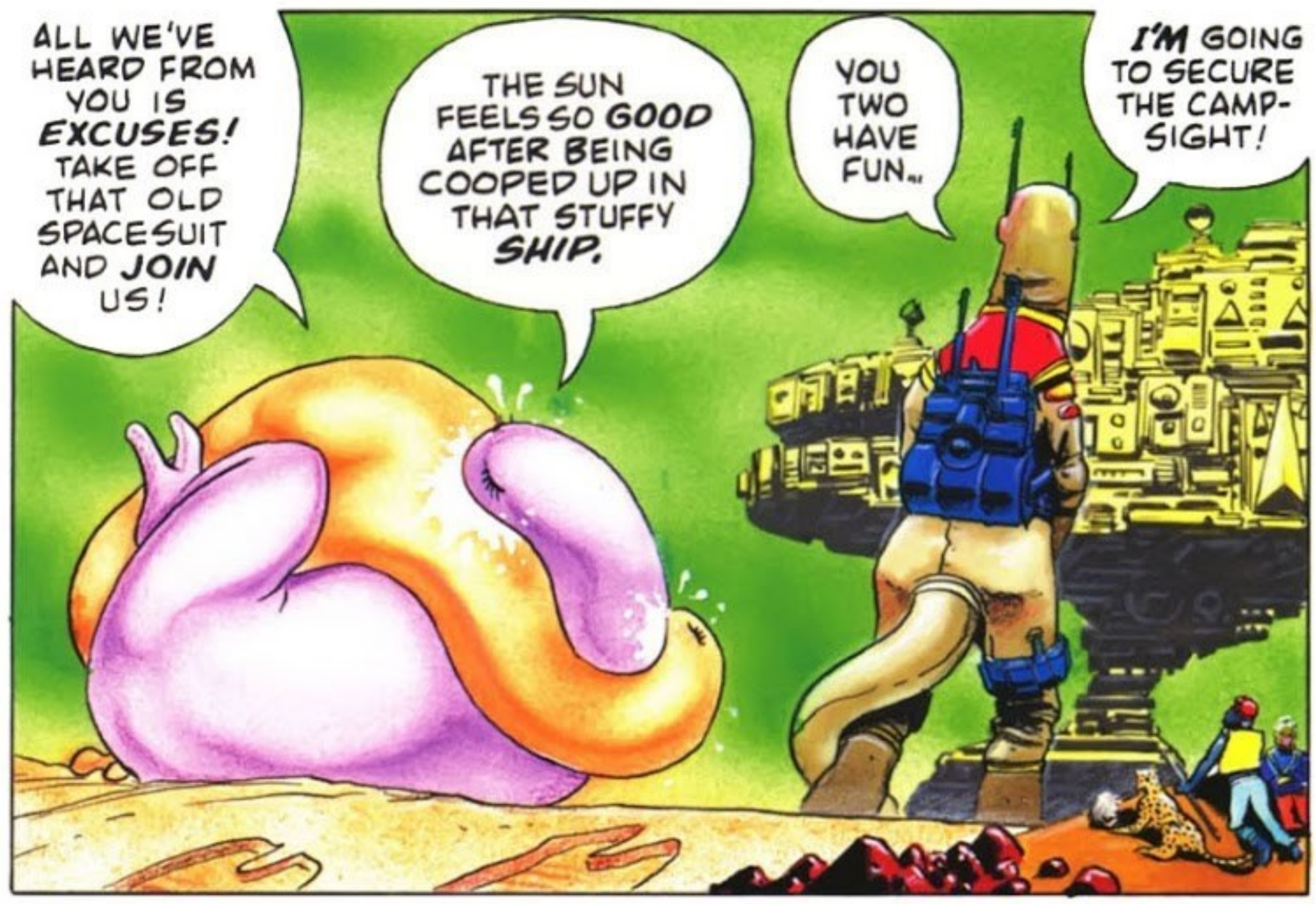

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AND WITHIN ONE OF THE CAVERNOUS HOLDS OF THE SHIP THAT BLASTS AWAY FROM THE WHALE PLANET...

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OF COURSE, SELF--AS SOON AS WE DOCK...

HEY, EVERYONE! COME HONOR LOON!

LOON HAS FOUND SELF! HERE HE IS! COME LOOK!

THERE ARE HORDES OF THEM LIVING IN HERE!

EVERY ONE ALTERED BY THE XLEXU SURGEONS...

...AND ALL MAD AS HATTERS!

HEY! LOON WINS PRIZE! LOON HAS FOUND SELF!

LOON, PLEASE LET ME FREE NOW?

SELF.

SELF.

HEY, BABY-- YOU WANT TO SLEEP WITH LOON? MAYBE LOON WILL INTRODUCE YOU TO SELF...

LISTEN UP, EVERYBODY! THE WHALE IS VERY SICK! WE'VE GOT TO WORK TOGETHER AND...

SELF.

SELF.

SELF.

SELF.

SELF.

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SELF.

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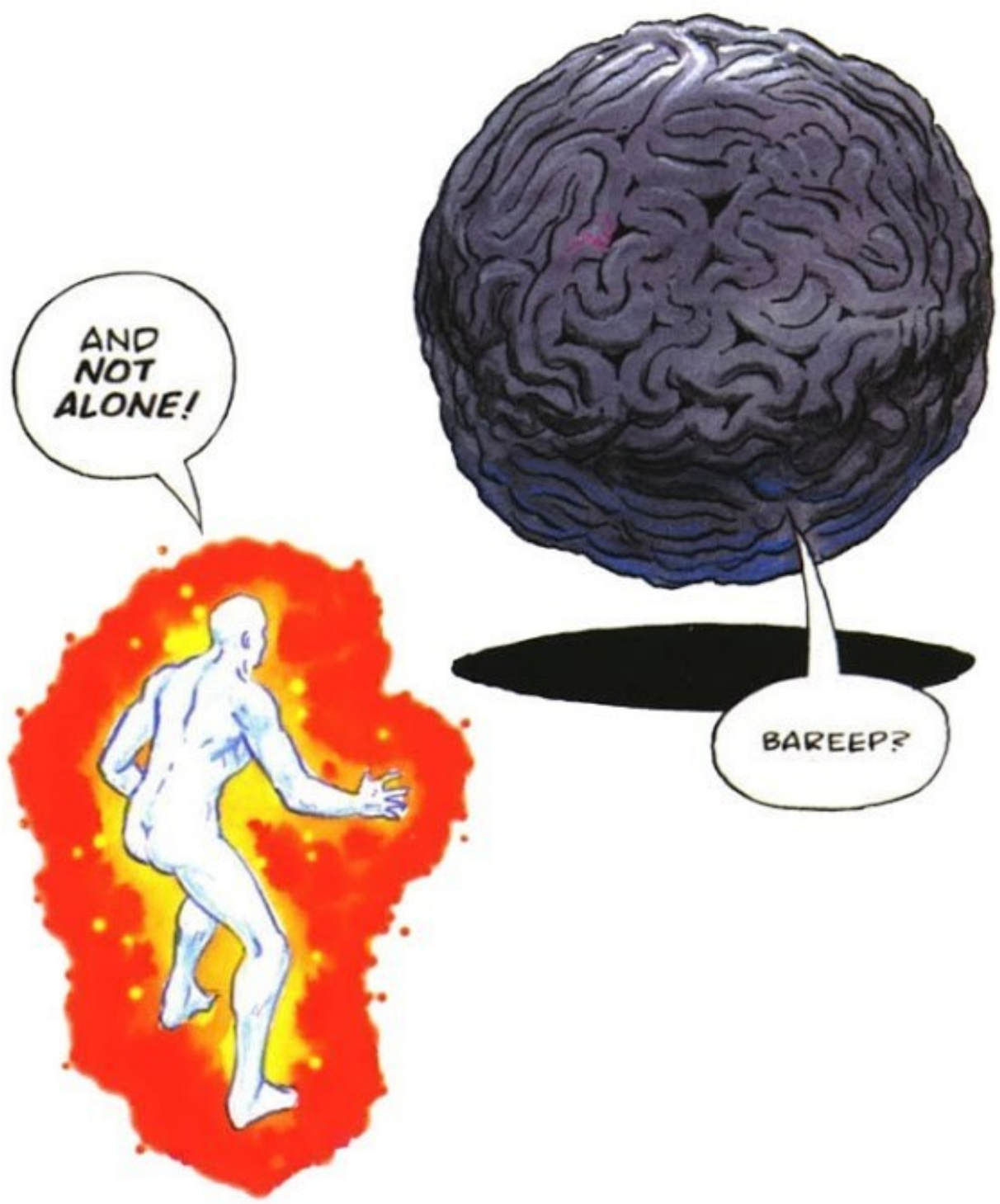
AS HE IS IMMERSED IN THE SAC OF NOXIOUS FLUID, ISAAC TRIES DESPERATELY TO DUPLICATE THE PROCESS OF AWAKENING, BUT...

IT'S **NO USE**-- IT'S **NOT WORKING!**

I'M GOING TO **SUFFOCATE** IN HERE!

SUDDENLY, AS IF OF ITS OWN VOLITION, HIS AURA EXPLODES OUT OF HIM--

IT SHRIEKS AND HOWLS THROUGH THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM OF THE GREAT RED...



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MEANWHILE, IN A SHIP BLASTING AWAY FROM THE WHALE PLANET...

RIDGE, YOU ARE THE MEANEST, STINGIEST PERSON IN THE **WHOLE** GALAXY!

WE **HATE** YOU!

AND WE'RE NOT GOING **ANYWHERE** WITH YOU **EVER** AGAIN!

UH HUH. ;BUUURP;

IF I DON'T GET SOME **FOOD** IN ME **SOON** I'LL BE AS HELPLESS AS STAUB AND FALCO...

I'VE **GOT TO** CHANCE IT!

AND MY **BEST** CHANCE IS THE **DIRECT APPROACH!**

RAT! RAT!

EEEE! KILL IT!

GOT ONE!

HUH? WHERE?

AAAAA!

OH HELL!

I **LOST** THE DAMN THING!

KRAK

OWWW! THE **NERVE** OF THAT **VERMIN!**

TAKE THIS YOU LITTLE BUGGER!

GOOD THING I HAD MY ESCAPE ROUTE ALL PLANNED!

SHIT, I MISSED.

ZZIISH!

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE **DONE!** YOU'VE **WRECKED** THE OVEN!

IT'S NOT **MY** FAULT! I'D HAVE HAD A CLEAR SHOT IF **YOU TWO** WEREN'T **HANGING** OVER ME!

BUT DON'T YOU WORRY-- I'VE GOT **JUST** THE THING I NEED TO TAKE CARE OF THIS LITTLE **RAT PROBLEM!**

BUT **THIS** PROBLEM HAS PROBLEMS OF HER OWN...

I GUESS ITS **HOPELESS** FOR US...

I'VE CURSED MYSELF FOR A FOOL AND A HALF SINCE I SIGNED ON WITH MAD CAPTAIN ROTWANG!

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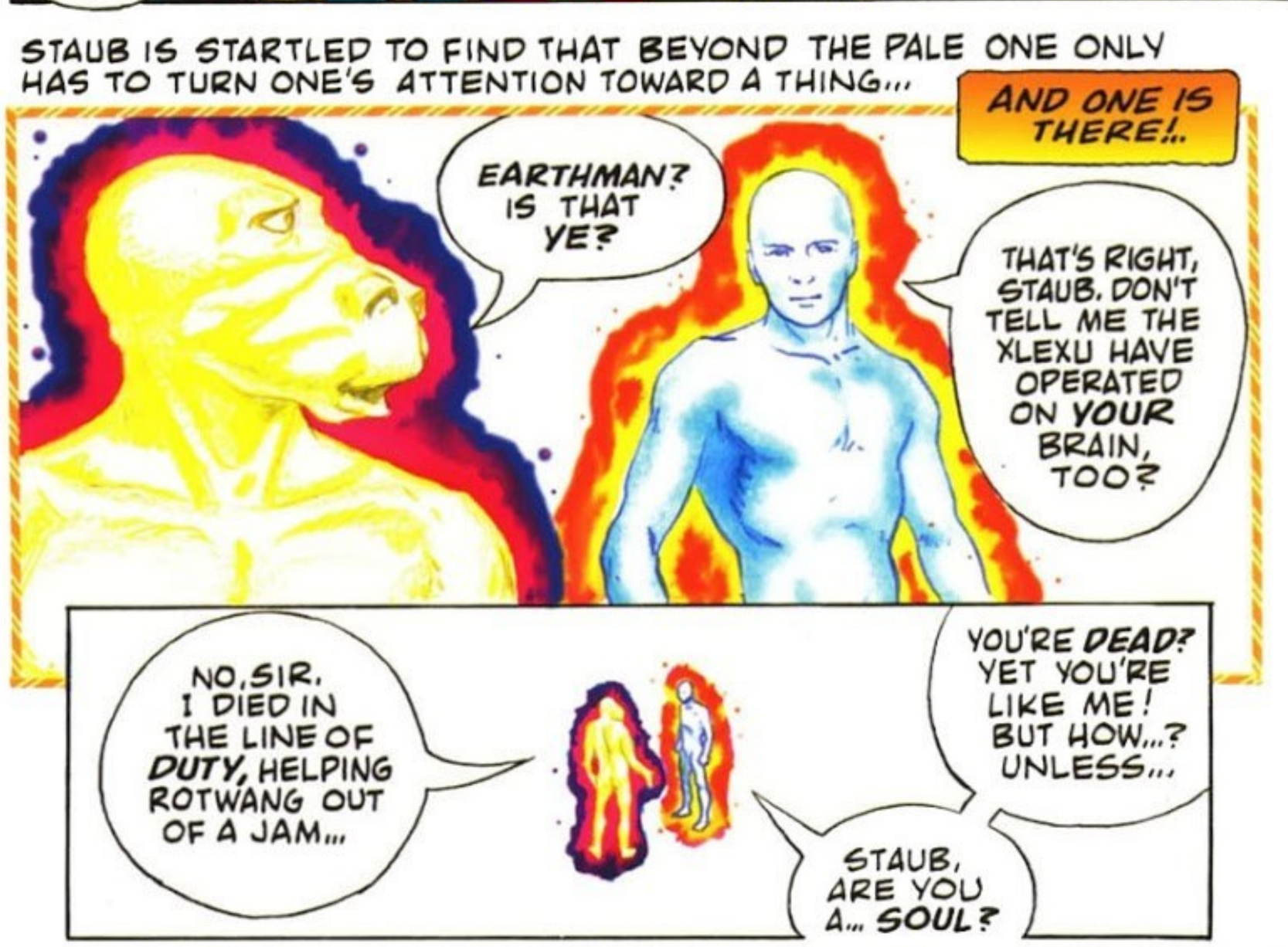

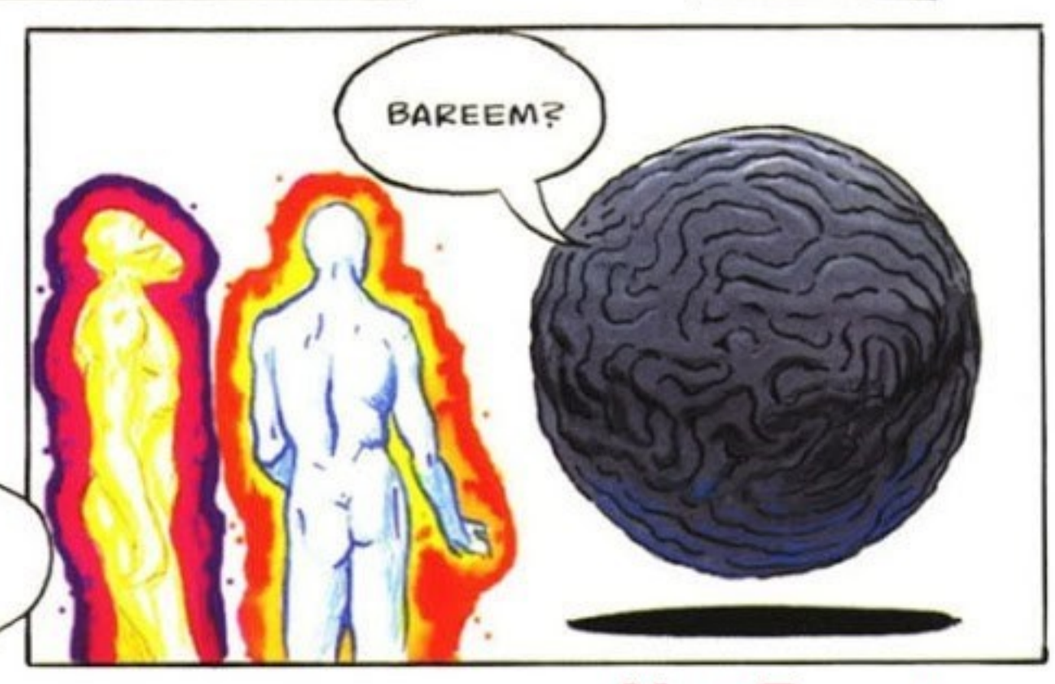

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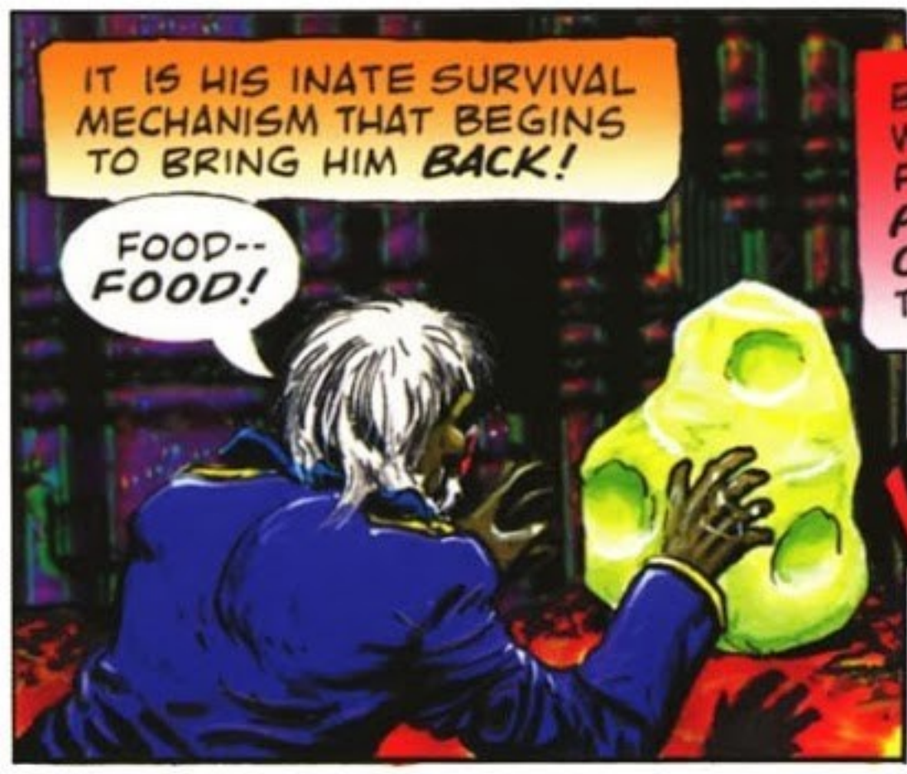

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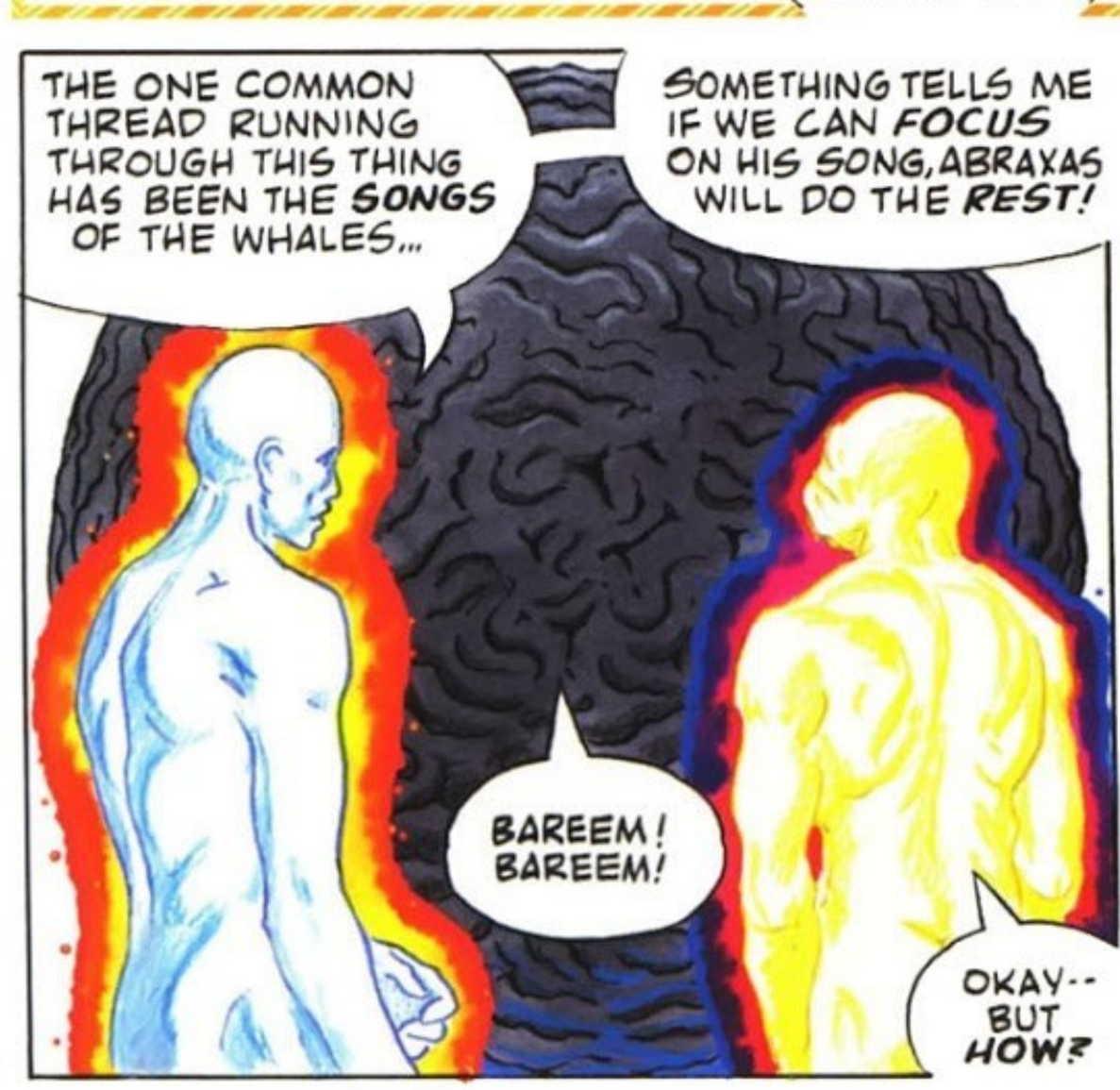

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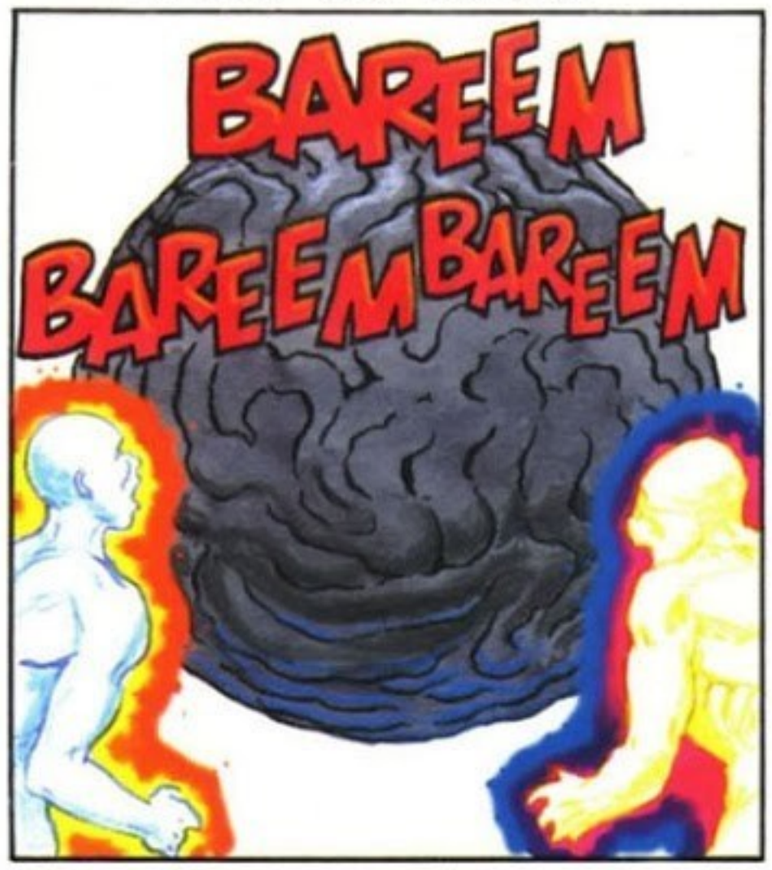
STAUB FINDS THAT THE SONG COMES EASILY TO THE PHANTOM LIPS OF HIS SOUL...



AS THE THREE MYSTICAL VOICES SYNCHRONIZE, SOMETHING ***ELSE***, SOMETHING MAGNIFICENT, IS BORN...

AND THE SOUL OF ABRAXAS IS FREED!

THERE IS ***NOTHING*** THAT CAN STAND UP TO THE CACOPHONY THAT SWEEPS ALONG THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF HIS BIO-SYSTEM...

THE TIME HAS COME FOR A MUCH-NEEDED ***PURGE...***

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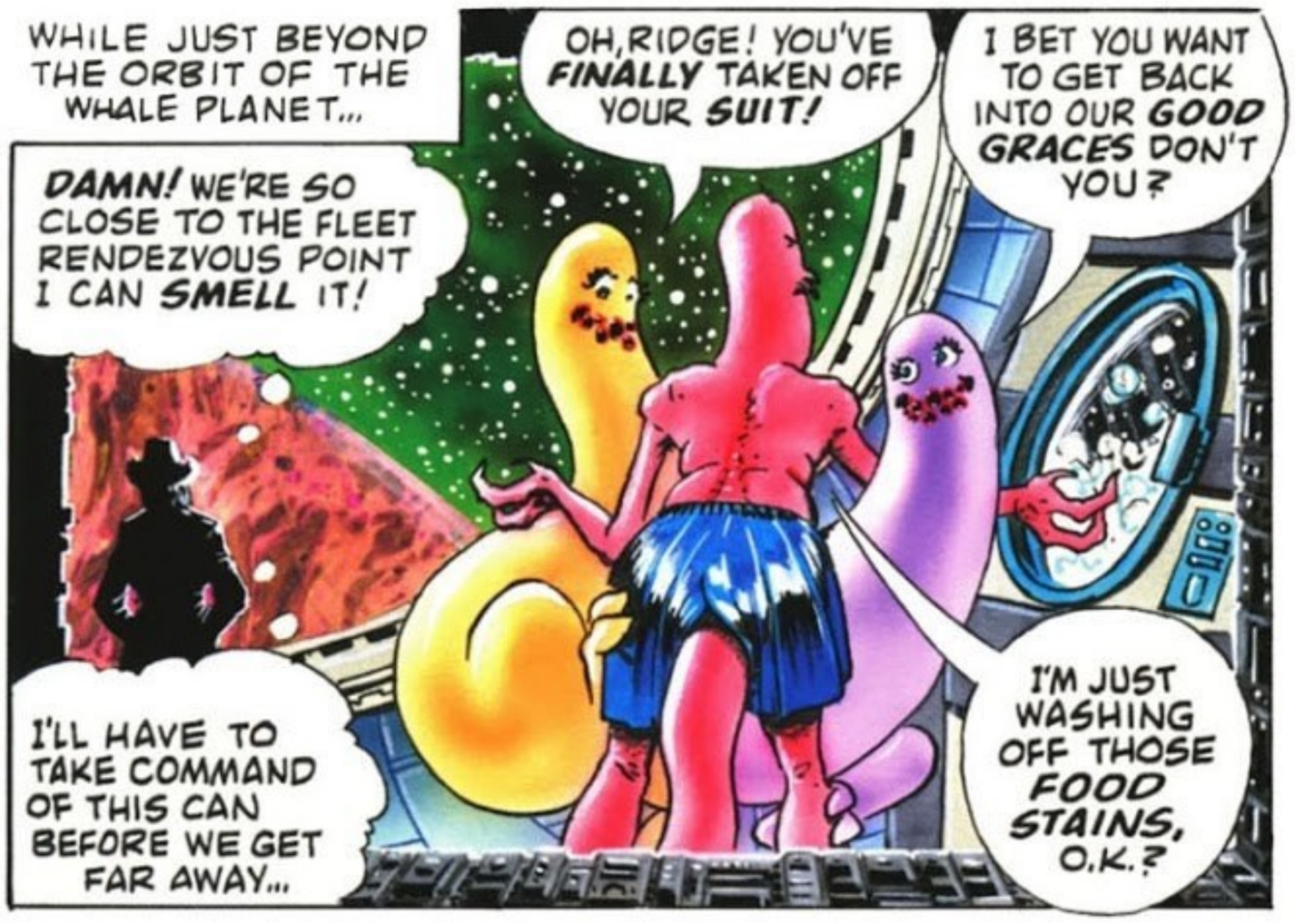

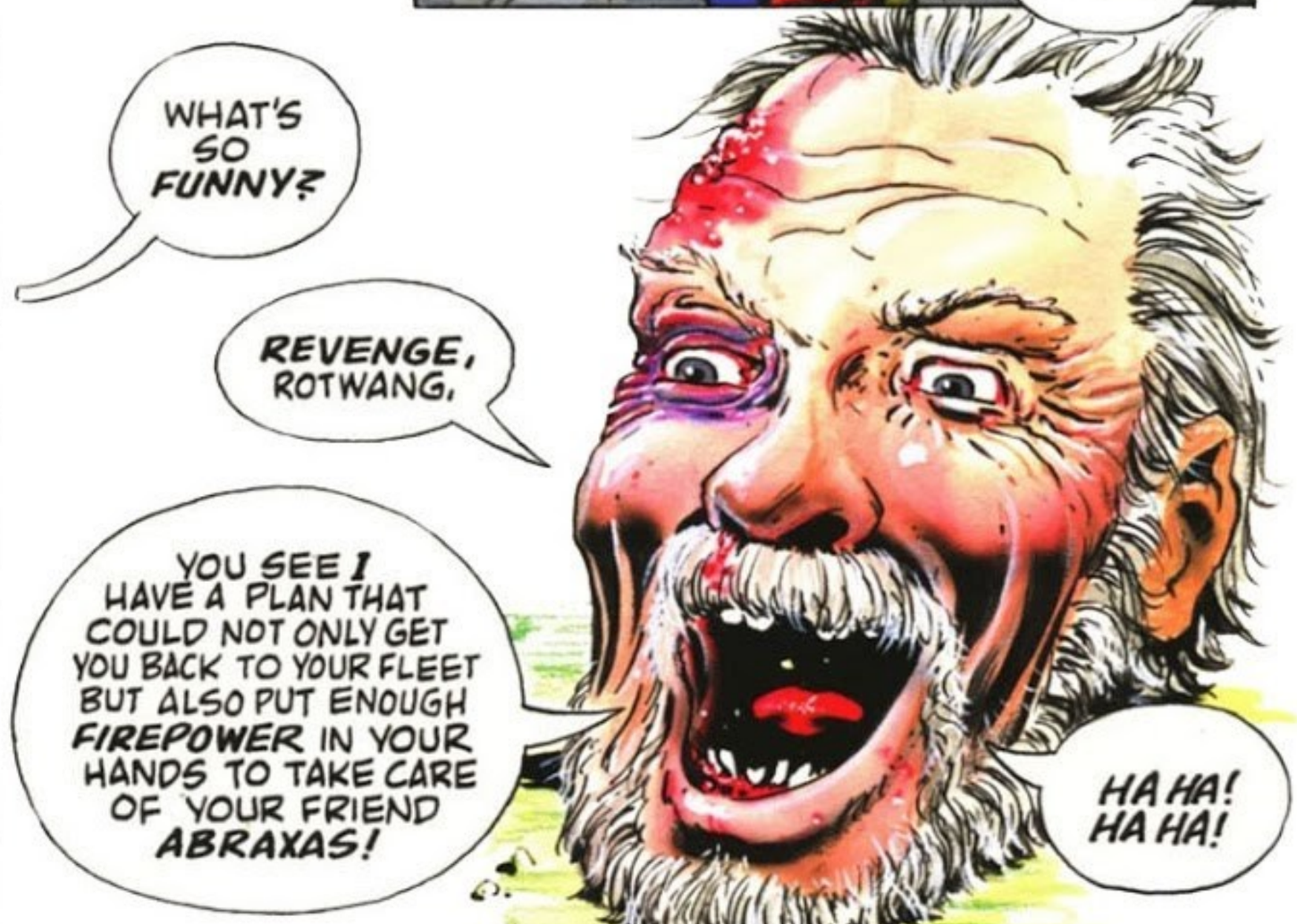

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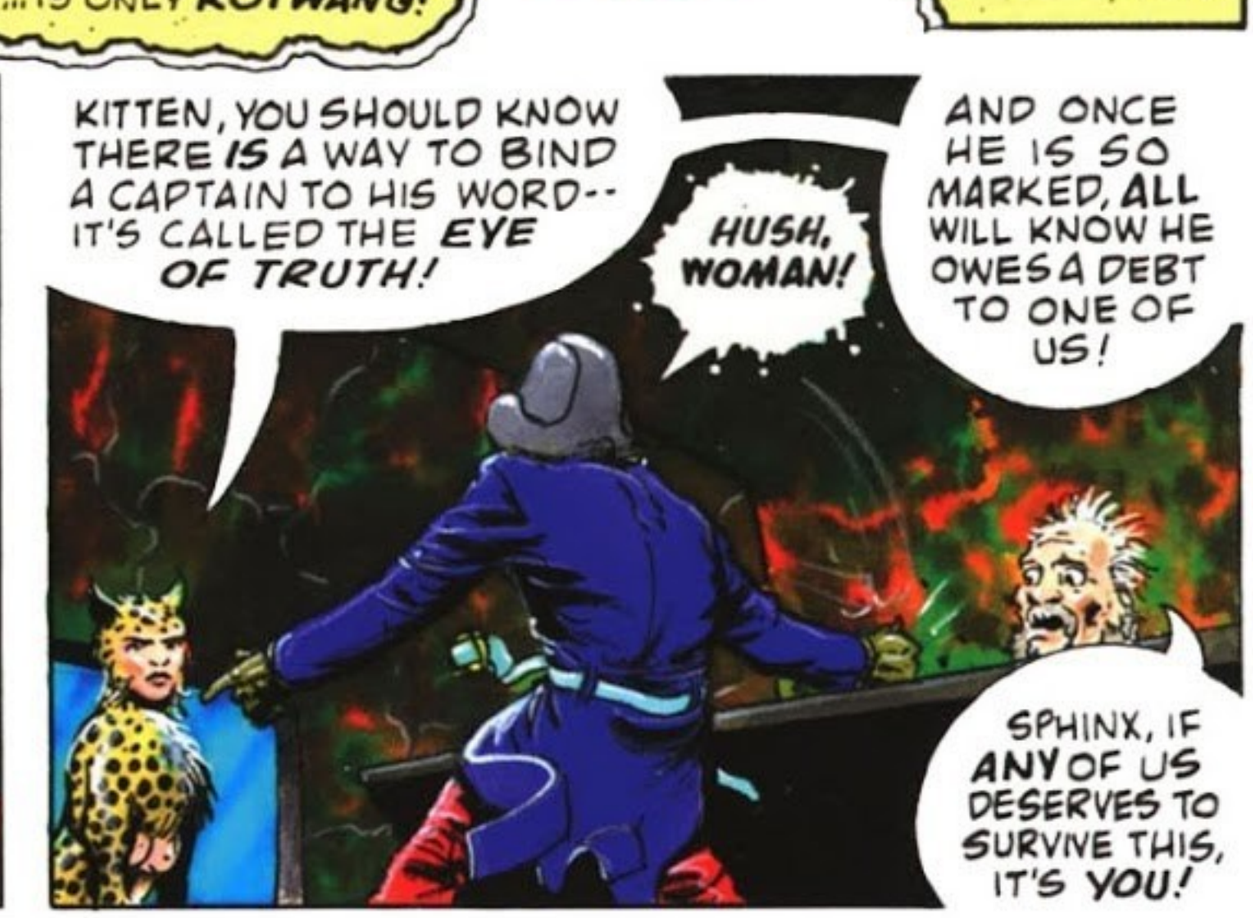

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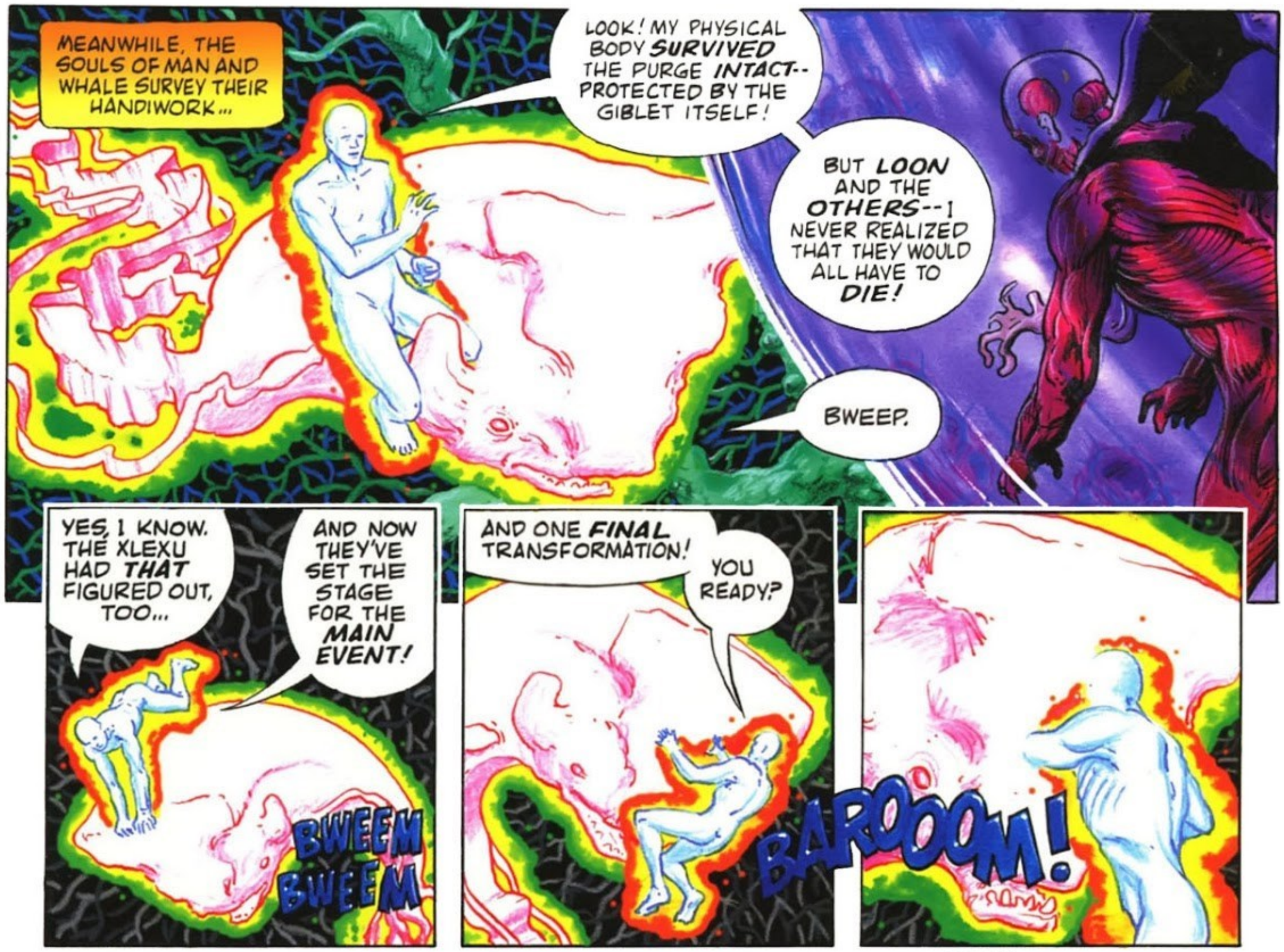

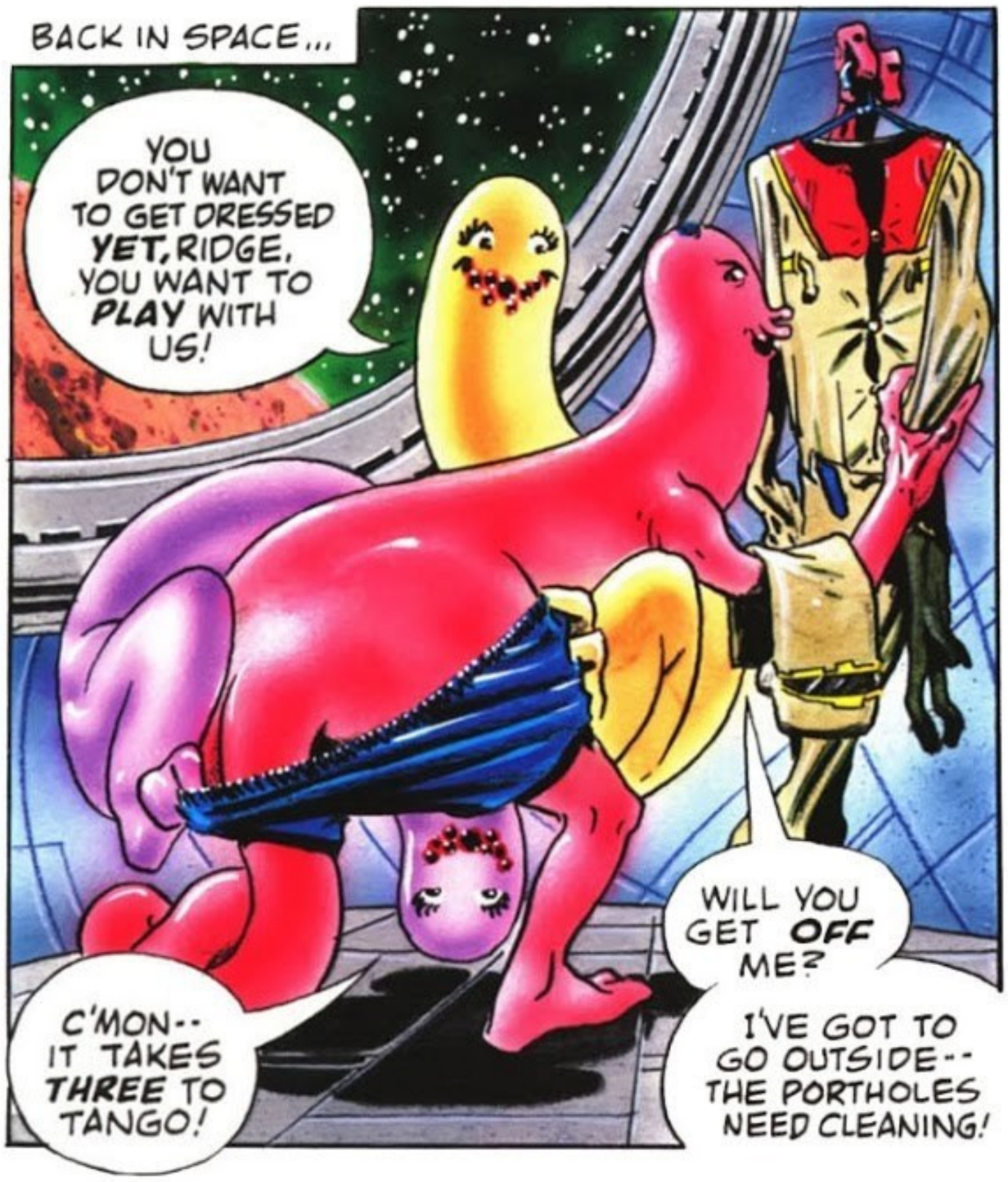

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I TOLD THE DATING SERVICE I WANTED SOME PEACE AND QUIET...

BUT NO! I END UP WITH THOSE TWO!

UMMPH. AND NOW I'VE GOT HEARTBURN FROM DINNER!

BUURP. OUCH!

I GOTTA' LAY OFF THAT SPICY STUFF!

GGAAAAKK!

HAR HAR! HE'S PUMPIN' LIKE A RUPTURED WHALE!

I'VE BURST HIS HEART FOR SURE!

SO FAR, YER PLAN'S BEEN A SOUND ONE, MISTER FALCO!

BUT HOW WILL THIS CORPSE GET US BACK TO THE FLEET?

WELCOME TO THE AGE OF TECHNOLOGY-- JUST PUSH THAT RED BUTTON FOR FORWARD THRUST!

I KNOW THESE STARS LIKE THE BACK OF ME OWN HAND! THIS IS THE DIRECTION WE WANT!

LET 'ER RIP!

OH, BOZE, WHY DOESN'T RIDGE LIKE US?

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT OLD MEANY ANYMORE!

AT LEAST WE HAVE EACH OTHER.

LET'S MAKE LOVE!

OKAY.

I LOVE YOU, MONA.

I LOVE YOU, TOO, BOZE.

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MAN AND WHALE

THE FLEET! WITH THE END OF ANOTHER HUNTING SEASON, THE GREAT WHALING SHIPS AND THEIR CREWS ASSEMBLE AT THE CUSTOMARY RENDEZVOUS POINT IN PREPARATION FOR THE LONG VOYAGE BACK TO THE HOME WORLD, KALIGHOUL...

SOME COME TO CELEBRATE VICTORIES OR MOURN LOSSES, AND SOME TO SWAP STORIES ABOUT THE BIG ONE THAT GOT AWAY...

...WHILE *OTHERS*, IT SEEMS, ARE DRIVEN BY *VENGEANCE!*

HEED ME, BROTHERS! I HAVE SUFFERED SHIPWRECK, MUTINY, AND DEPRIVATIONS OF *EVERY* KIND IN FINDING MY WAY *BACK* HERE TO YE...

AND IN SO DOING I HAVE SECURED THE *WEAPON* THAT WILL *END* ABRAXAS' DIABOLIC REIGN!

WE'LL DAMN WELL HAVE TO SEE THE *PROOF* BEFORE WE SAIL INTO THOSE JAWS AGAIN...

WE WANT AN END TO THAT RED-HORNED MENACE AS WELL AS *YE*, ROTWANG, BUT--

I DOUBT *THAT*, BROTHERS.

SO YE SHALL SEE THE *POWER* THAT PROVIDENCE HAS PLACED IN THE HANDS OF ROTWANG!

GUNNERS-- WE'VE A FINE TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY BEFORE US...

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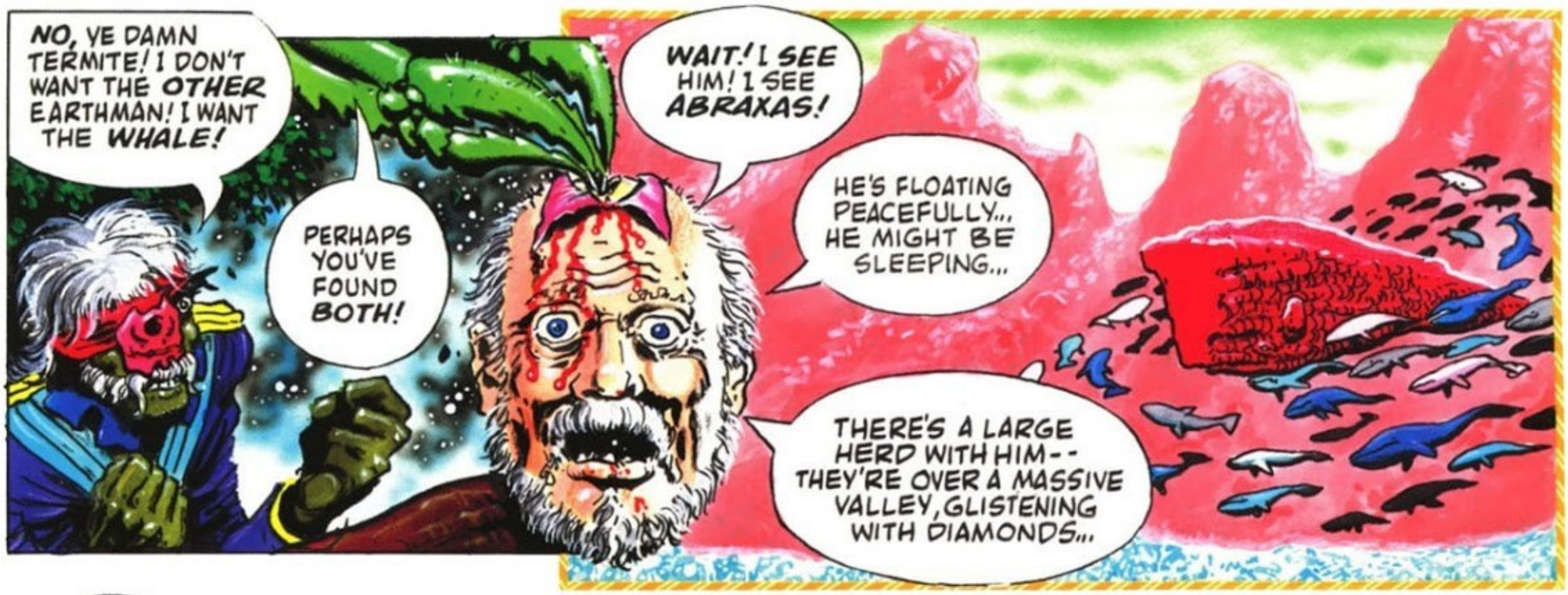

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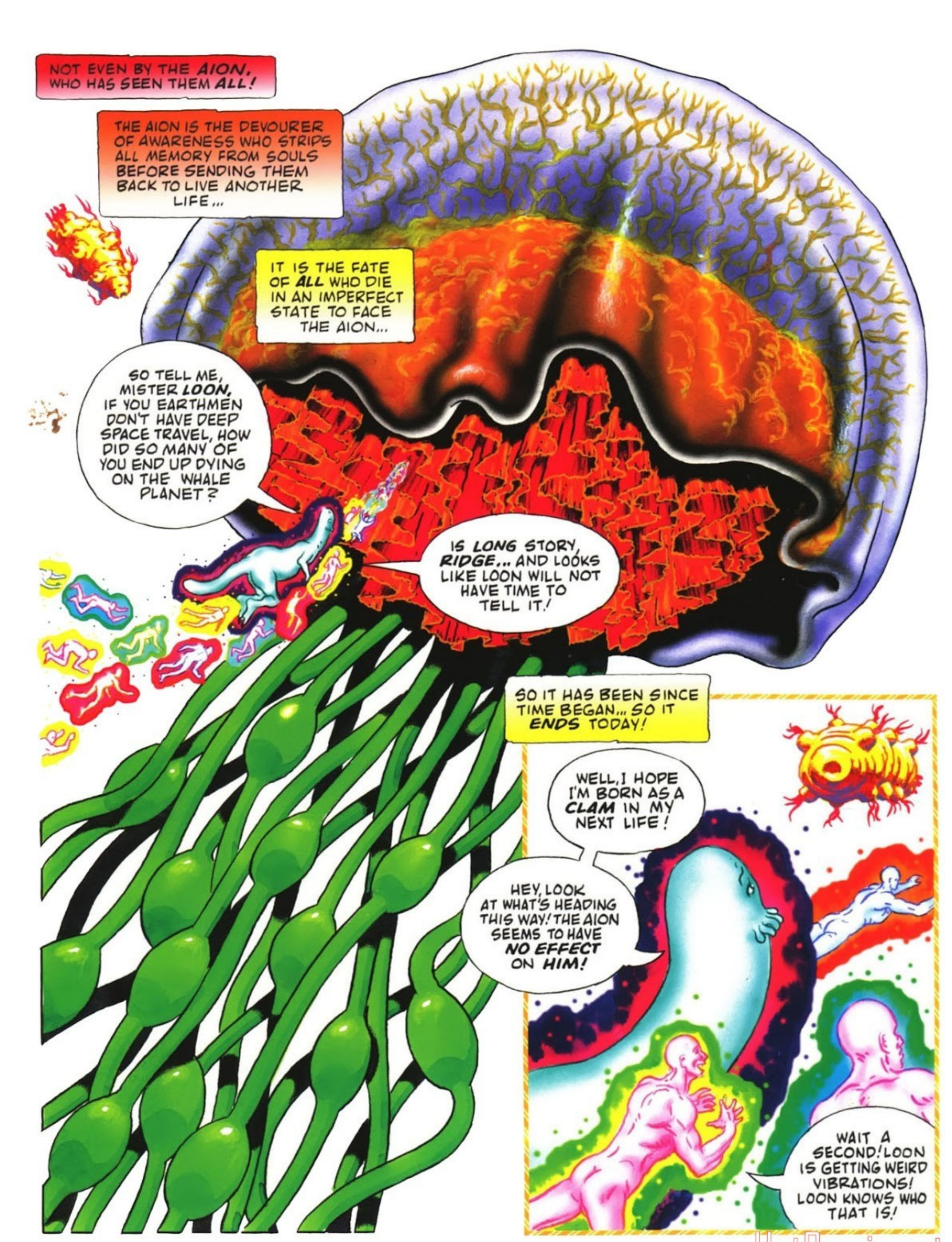

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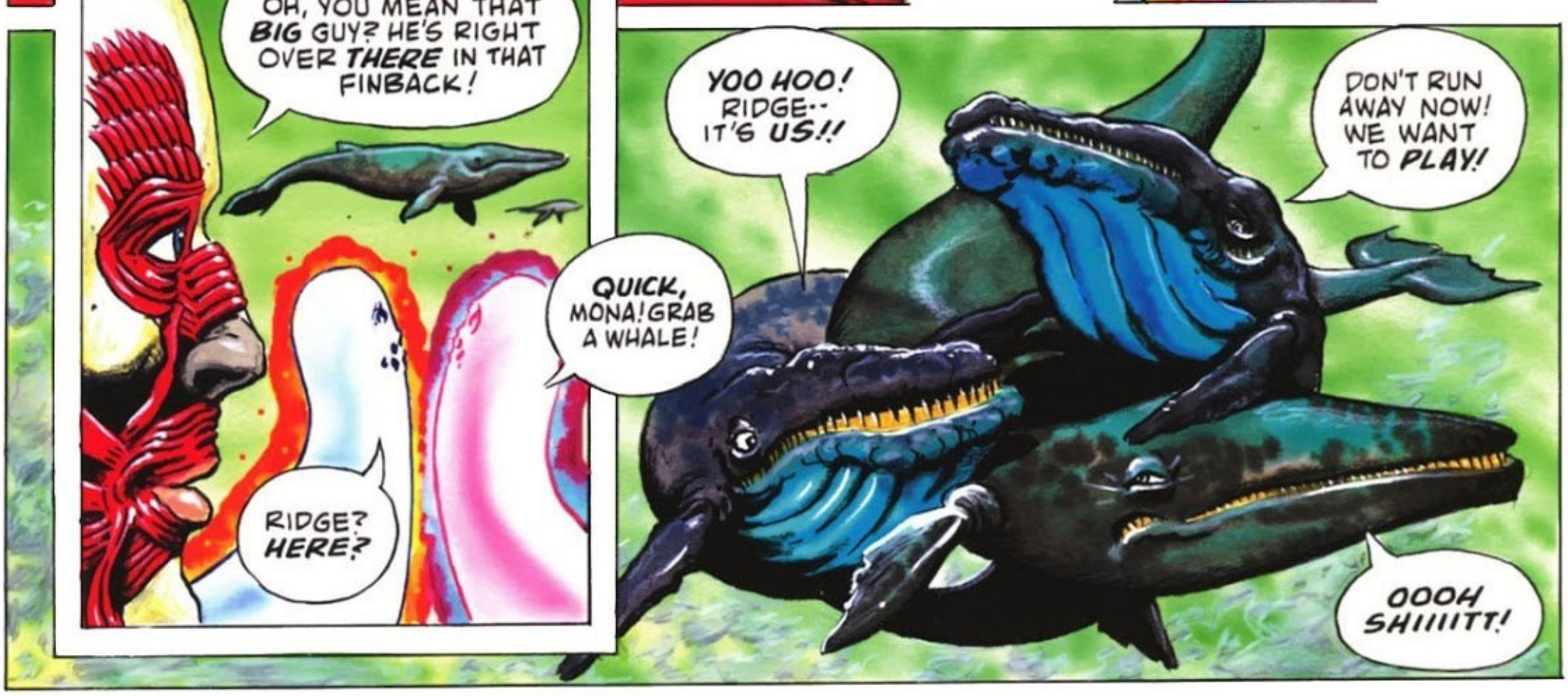

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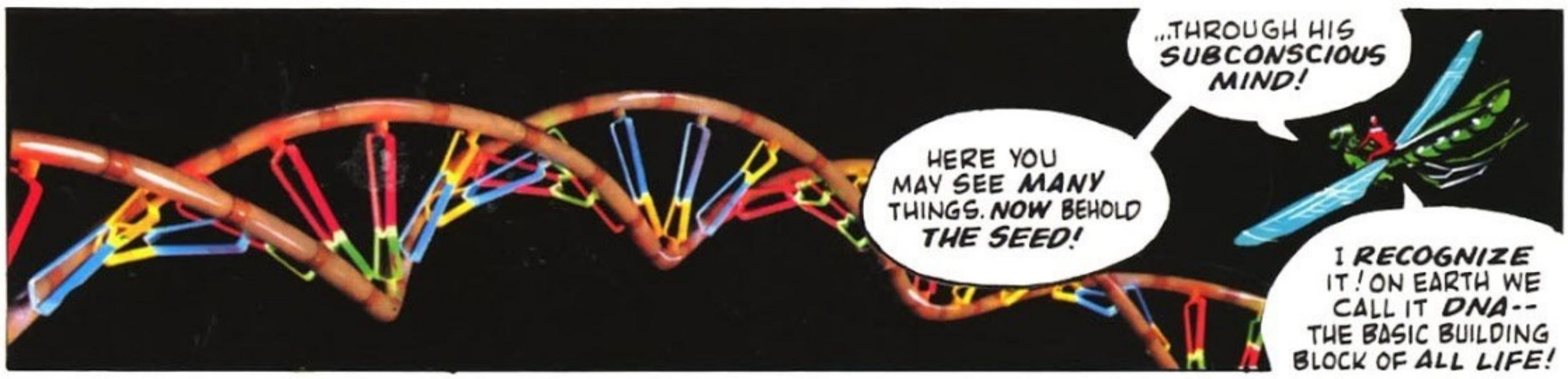
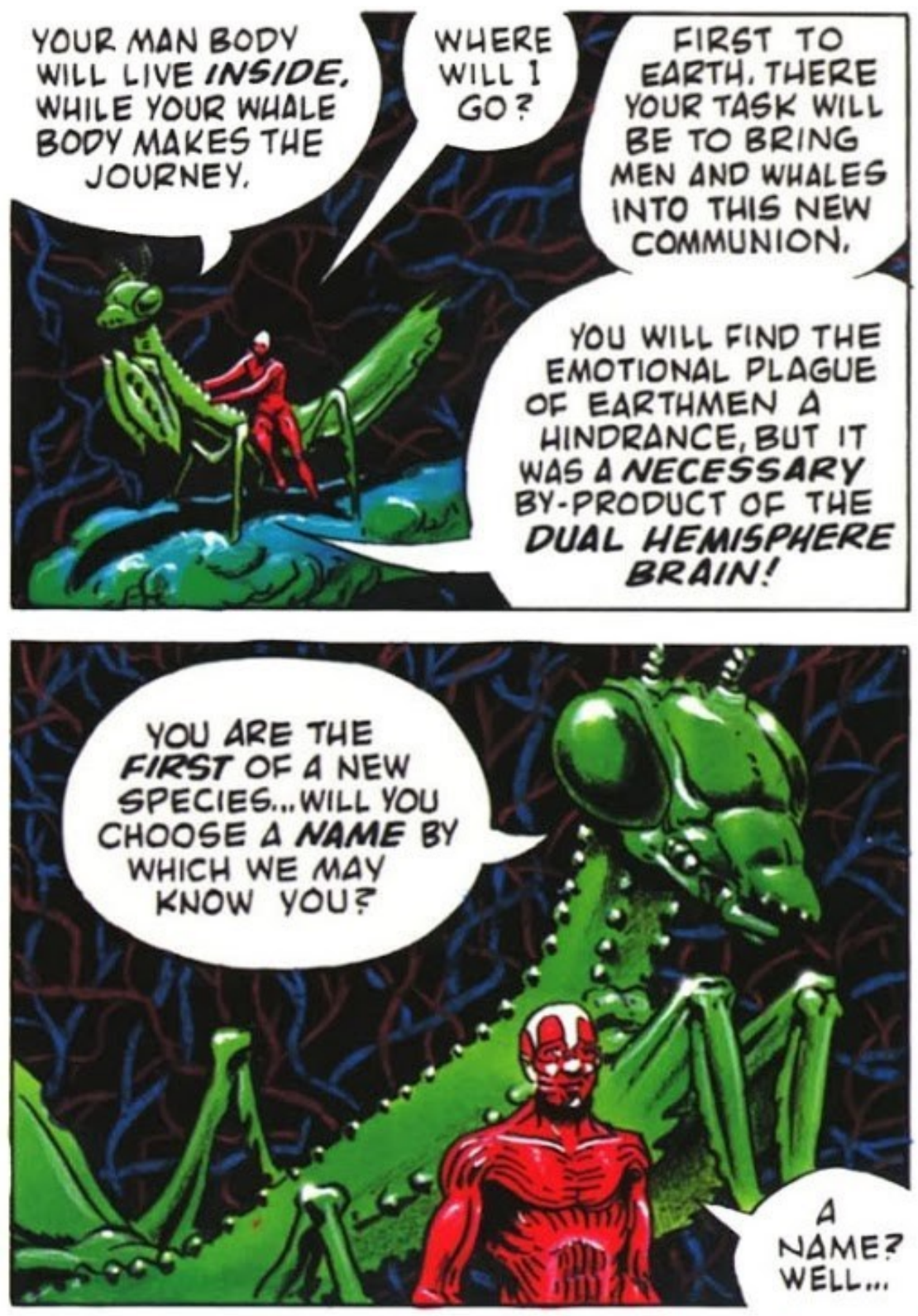
ISAAC IS SOARING ON XLEXU WINGS...





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Twenty-Five Years Before the Mast

An Abraxas Memoir

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Twenty-Five Years Before the Mast

An Abraxas Memoir by Rick Veitch

was but thirty years of age when first I put pencil to paper on Abraxas and the Earthman. I was also just beginning to live the life I'd imagined for myself from childhood; exploring my creative imagination as a professional cartoonist.

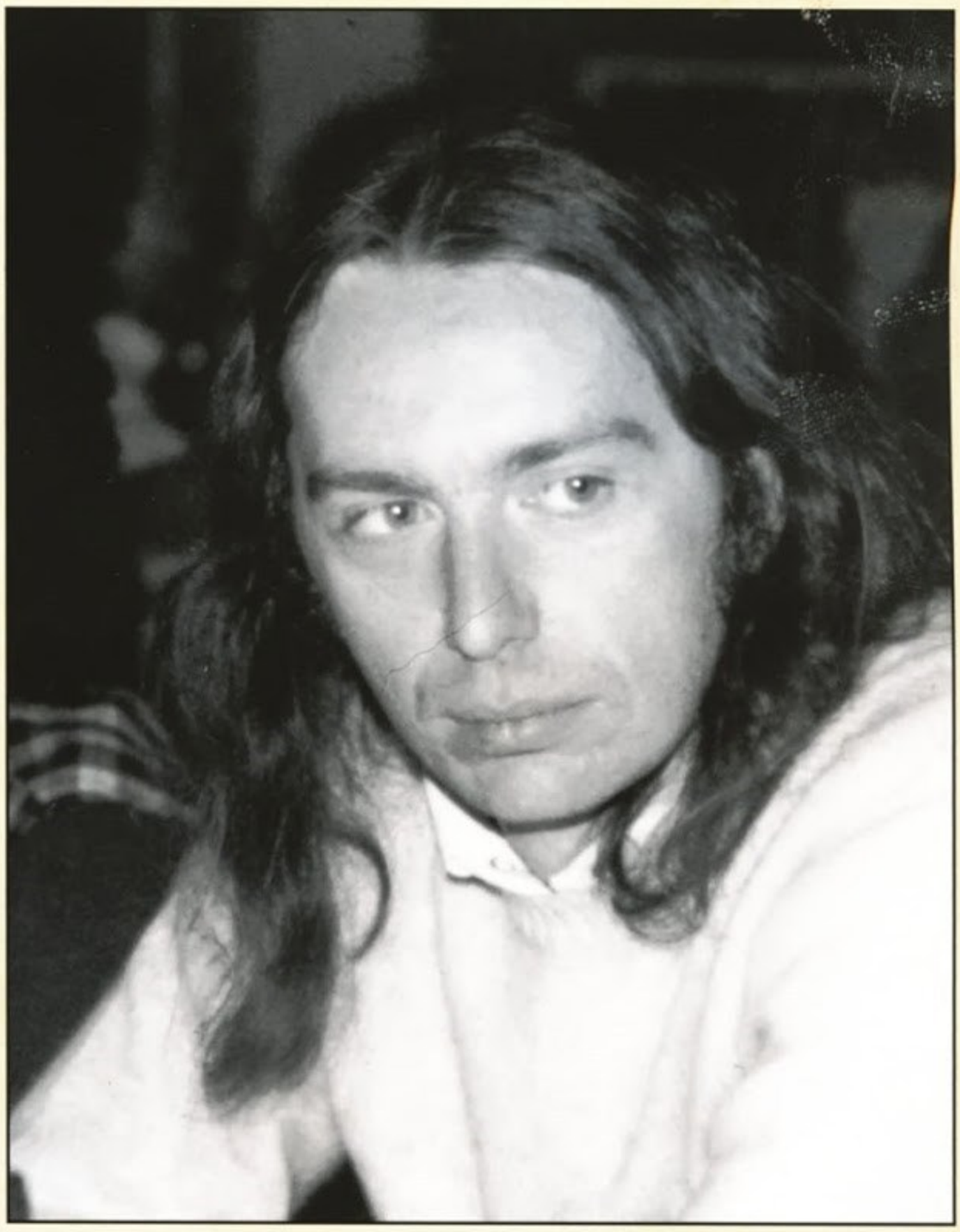
The late 1970's were considered by all and sundry a terrible season to be launching a career in comics. The industry was run by pirates and taking on water. Old Salts, who'd long seen it as cursed, counseled staying clear of the sinking ship.

But in truth, my timing in getting under weigh couldn't have been more fortuitous. Comics were actually on the cusp of reinventing themselves, both as an art form and a business; generating a cultural wave that would raise all boats, including my own, for many years to come.

With few exceptions, comics of the seventies seemed lacking in imagination or ideas. The best sea dogs had jumped ship or been forced to walk the plank. The last surviving mainstream lines, Marvel and DC, were still fishing for sales among thirteen year olds, oblivious to the huge schools of grown-up baby boomers hungry for exotic comics of their own. HEAVY METAL was the first to find that waiting audience, offering treasures shipped in from France, served in a full color glossy format.

Just out of Kubert School and hustling my portfolio around New York, I got an interview with HEAVY METAL's chief mate, John Workman, who gave me one of my first professional gigs, producing filler strips and illustrations for the magazine's back pages.

The undeniable sophistication of



The artiste broods at the Salone Internazionale Dei Comics in Lucca Italy. October 1980.

Photo by Peter Maresca.

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craft and ideas coming out of Europe was quickly making the long underwear comics look pretty threadbare and Marvel was first to rise to the challenge with their own flagship. As luck would have it, Steve Bissette and I walked up Marvel's gang-plank just as they were laying the keel for what would ultimately be called EPIC MAGAZINE. Publisher Stan Lee and editor Rick Marschall were buying stuff that was wild, colorful and far outside Marvel's usual fare. Steve and I pitched Rick an eight page fantasy story, MONKEY SEA, and got a sale. We collaborated on all parts of it, incorporating collage material into the painted artwork, an original technique that we would push to the ultimate limit in our adaption of Steven Spielberg's 1941 for HEAVY METAL that same year.

Ahh, memories.

When EPIC finally set sail it was helmed by a new skipper, Archie Goodwin, who purchased my first solo story, SOLAR PLEXUS. It promptly appeared with the pages out of order in EPIC #4. I'm not sure if he liked my stuff or felt bad because of the screw up, but Archie encouraged me to keep pitching ideas to EPIC. Somehow, I became a regular contributor, creating a whole raft of fantasy and sci/fi shorts such as LANDMASS, BOSSY, SHIPMATES, CONQUEST OF THE BANANA PLANET and SHINY BEAST. One of my earliest collaborations with Alan Moore, LOVE DOESN'T LAST FOREVER, was done for Archie.

What was truly revolutionary about EPIC (aside from the ads for cigarettes and booze) was the contract. While the comics industry still routinely assumed all rights to intellectual properties they published, the EPIC agreement specified one-time-use only. Unlike most young sailors shipping out, I never signed away my early work in the purser's book.

In the midst of crafting six and eight pagers for EPIC, the idea of attempting a more substantial project got its hook in me. I'd first heard the term "graphic novel" when Will Eisner spoke at Kubert School in 1976, laying out his vision of literate comics in bound book form.

Deciding to embark on one of these new "graphic novels", I began to whittle ideas and concepts. I wanted to avoid all the overdone genres like space detectives, elves or sword and sorcery, while still offering something of natural interest to my sci fi/fantasy audience.

I was also keeping my inner eye peeled for an idea that promised some sort of personal meaning for me. In writing and illustrating my short stories for EPIC,

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I'd enjoyed an organic creative process that was much more satisfying than the monthly comic book grind. The material I was producing was meant as entertainment for a paying audience, and I hope it succeeds at that. But each story grew out of me naturally too, mapping some part of my internal landscape. If I was going to attempt a graphic novel, it's theme had to feel like it might answer a question I didn't even know I needed to ask.

I stumbled on MOBY-DICK while sketching a squid creature with a shack on its back; the intrigueing idea of low-tech space whalers spooling out from there.

There'd been a few pirate comics in the fifties, and a Classics Illustrated version of MOBY-DICK, but to the best of my knowledge the whaling theme hadn't been fished out. And Herman Melville's iconic tale of the crazy peg-legged captain's quest for the white whale was drenched in the kind of melodrama comics thrive on.

What finally got me to sign on to the concept was the symbolism, which in MOBY-DICK isn't forced or over-intellectualized. We don't need a high school lit teacher to point it out; Ahab and the whale are already cartoons, pure archetypes straight out of a timeless fairy tale.

Some say Melville's story symbolizes "Man Against Nature", while others point to the freak albinism of the whale, arguing for a "Man Against God" analogy. Still others will greet Davey Jones believing Ahab's madness is the ultimate metaphor for "Man Against Himself".

Rereading the book, I saw all these and something more; that the symbolic framework Melville built his novel around was a clear model for the structure of the human psyche.

Historian M. Thomas Inge quotes

Mad Captain Veitch stalks the bridge of the Pine Banks Road studio, Charles Lloyd Quintet swinging on the FM.

Photo by Lou Corbett

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me discussing this in his "MELVILLE IN POPULAR CULTURE" (A Companion To Melville Studies, Greenwood Press, 1986).

Says I: *"There is a crippled Ahab that walks the decks of all our psyches, screaming vengeance against whatever it is (God? Creativity? Our own untapped potential?) that lives hidden beneath the waves of the unconscious and is personified in the great white whale!"*. Can't tell I'm a comic book writer I bet.

I go on to describe how ABRAXAS AND THE EARTHMAN is an extension of the themes of MOBY-DICK: *"My story means to say that in the century since Melville constellated this archetype, the relationship between the captain, the whale and the witness (*Ishmael *in MOBY-DICK,* Isaac *in my story) have gained considerably, to the point that the whale and the witness at the end become joined in symbiotic union."*

The transformation that caps Abraxas found inspiration in the life and work of John C. Lilly. A true explorer of consciousness, Lilly did considerable research into marine mammal intelligence and served as the model for Ken Russell's ALTERED STATES.

I had a "John Lilly" character in my original outline but Archie thought it might be unwise to use a real person's name without their permission. Sitting in his office, I thought for a second and changed "Lilly" to "Isaac". At the time I honestly didn't know that in the Bible, Isaac is brother to Ishmael.

was working in a hexagonal studio anchored in a tall pine forest in Putney Vermont. The space was cavernous, its hand hewn beams creaking like an old ship of the line. Due to some atmospheric fluke my FM receiver could pick up an all-jazz radio station out of Boston. I spent a year and a half zoned out on Miles and Coltrane, building the novel chapter by chapter.

I worked the art on three ply Strathmore with a kid finish, inking lightly over pencils and then building up the color. I'd begin with transparent Dr. Martin dyes, some laid down with airbrush and frisket. From there I'd add highlights and shadows with opaque gouache and colored pencils. I also kept a gutted pile of donor books and magazines from which I'd slice weird color photos and graphics to incorporate in the paintings.

This collage method worked visual wonders in those pre-digital days. But it was tedious as hell, requiring painstaking X-Acto cutting and much patchwork for complex shapes. The pages have an undeniable hand-made quality with their layers of tape and clinging rubber cement boogers. With today's emphasis on squeaky clean Photoshop imagery, I doubt you will see comics made with this kind of laborious process ever again.

Sounds like I had it knocked, right? Finally attained my childhood dream to be a cartoonist. Getting paid to do the kind of art I wanted. Retaining ownership. Working on an ambitious graphic novel in a counter-culture paradise. At one point I even found myself at a European festival hanging out with Moebius and Hugo Pratt!

Well, guess again. Somewhere about the third chapter, I began to have doubts. Not about the material, which was coming out better than I'd hoped, but about my career choice! I know it sounds crazy, and its not like me at all, but I began talking to friends and associates about leaving comics. For reasons I couldn't put my finger on, I was suddenly possessed by

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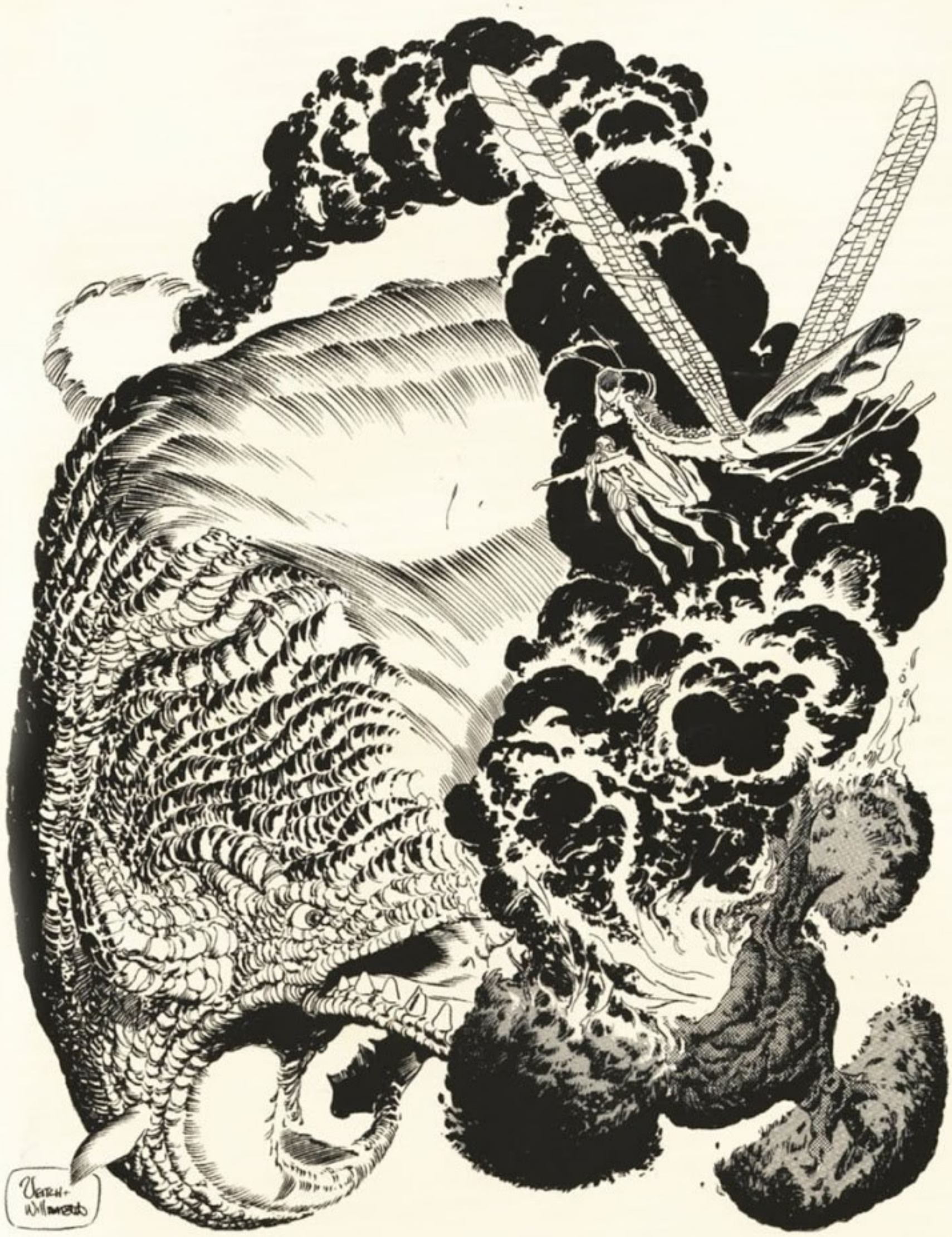

the notion that I should go back to school and learn animation.

Fortunately before I did anything stupid, I called my old teacher, Joe Kubert, and asked his advice. He listened to my story and told me flatly that I was nuts. That if I turned my back on what I'd attained now I'd regret it for the rest of my life. It was some of the best and most timely advice I ever received. Thanks, Joe!

As I began the fourth chapter of ABRAXAS it finally dawned on me that there was something else going on that I hadn't seen. Its a bit hard to explain, but somehow the story was happily answering a question I didn't even know I needed to ask. The question was: Now that I'd become a real professional cartoonist, how did I actually feel about doing art for money?

I recognized In ABRAXAS the all-consuming obsession to my pursuit of art. I saw the self-defeating internal conflicts I'd had to overcome to achieve success in a commercial field. And I began to get a bead on how working in a hard-nosed business I had spent a lifetime fantasizing about was affecting me.

Later, I would learn that this revelation was the sort of emotional pivot point writers and artists always seek; when an interesting idea takes on a life of its own and suddenly you're wrestling with your Siamese Twin.

For me, it's the kind of art that Melville himself famously referred to as "objectification of feeling"; when the harpoon sinks deep, Leviathan sounds and all thought of regaining shore (or changing careers) vanishes in the ever spiraling sea.

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